CAROLINE VAN ECK

PIRANESI'S CANDELABRA AND THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

Excessive Objects and the Emergence of a Style in the Age of Neoclassicism

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Piranesi's Candelabra and the Presence of the Past

Excessive Objects and the Emergence of a Style in the Age of Neoclassicism

Caroline van Eck

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my mother, who taught me always to look things in the face.

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4.15 Casa del Sacello Iliaco or Casa del Larario di Achille (I.6.4), Pompeii, Room 11, east wall, wall painting of elephants [photo: Wikimedia Commons/The Wilhelmina and Stanley A. Jashemski Archive in the University of Maryland].

4.16 Lion-man of the Hohlenstein-Stadel, 35,000–40,000 years old, mammoth ivory carving, 31.1 cm × 5.6 cm × 5.9 cm, Ulm: Archäologische Sammlung, Museum Ulm [photo: Dagmar Hollmann, Wikimedia Commons].

4.17 Table with three bovid legs surmounted by swan's heads, first BCE–first CE, probably from Luxor, Brussels, Musée du Cinquantenaire [photo: author].

4.18 Charles Percier (design) and Martin-Guillaume Biennais (1764–1843) (gilder), Tripod washstand (Athénienne or lavabo), 1800–1814, legs, base, and shelf of yew wood; gilt-bronze mounts; iron plate beneath shelf, h.92.4 cm, diam. 49.5 cm [photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York].

4.19 Luigi Manfredini (1771–1840) and Francesco Manfredini (active *c.* 1810–20), Isis Tripod in gilt bronze and green antique marble, Milan 1811–13, private collection [photo: author].

4.20 The Sala degli Animali, Museo Pio-Clementino (1775–1799), Vatican Museums [photo: Darafsh Kaviyani/Wikimedia Commons].

4.21 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vaso antico di Marmo con suo Piedestallo, che al presentesive de in Inghilterra nella Villa del Sig. Giovanni Boyd*…from *Vasi, candelabri, cippi*, vol. II (Paris 1800–1809), 675 × 420 mm [photo: Ghent University Library].

4.22 Italian manufacture, detail of large bookcase decorated with swans, eagles, turtles, etc, various kinds of wood including figured maple, 275 × 368 × 101 cm, early nineteenth century, Rome: Museo Mario Praz, Inv p. 23, cat. 401 [photo: author].

4.23 Neapolitan manufacture, coupe with a tripod with heads of deer and ram, early nineteenth century, tinted and gilt bronze, 46 × 15.5 cm, Rome: Museo Mario Praz, Inv. 338ab, cat. 529 [photo: author].

4.24 Francesco Righetti (1748–1819), Tazza supported by three hippogriffs, early nineteenth century, bronze, antique green marble, 21.3 × 22.5 cm, Rome: Museo Mario Praz, Inv p. 60 [photo: author].

4.25 Joseph Le Lorrain (1715–1759) (designer) and Joseph Baumhauer (1747–1772) (cabinet maker), Desk with file case and pendulum, 1757, oak, ebony and brass; ebony veneer, gilded bronze, and leather [photo: Mel22/Wikimedia Commons].

4.26 Jean-Laurent Legeay (1708–1786), Vase Supported by Intertwined Serpents, 1768, etching [photo: National Gallery of Art Washington].

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4.28 Design attributed to Charles Heathcote Tatham (1772–1842), manufacture attributed to Marsh & Tatham, Console table, ca. 1805–1811, red pine,

gilding, travertine marble, plaster, and iron, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Rienzi Collection, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harris Masterson III, 94.1194.2,86.4 × 142.2 × 76.2 cm [photo: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston].

4.29 Jean Baptiste Claude Odiot, Sauceboat, *c.* 1819, gilded silver, 34.3 × 29.6 cm × 16.2 cm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum [photo: Rijksmuseum Studio].

4.30 Martin Guillaume Biennais, Coffee pot, *c.* 1817, gilded silver and ebony, 37 × 22.5 × 16 cm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum [photo: Rijksmuseum Studio].

4.31 Jessie Tarbox Beals (1870–1942), View of five Native American totem poles, 1904, non-projected black and white photograph, 7.125 × 9 in [photo: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University].

4.32 Hermann Rorschach (1884–1922), *Inkblot Test, one of ten Rorschach inkblot test cards in cardboard case*, 1921 [photo: © Science Museum London].

4.33 *Dogon Mask Representing an Antelope (Walu)*, nineteenth century, wood, fibre, pigment, Charles B. Benenson, B.A. 1933, Collection 2006.51.46, 53.34 × 20.32 × 19.05 cm [photo: Yale University Art Gallery, African Art].

5.1 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* Plate 57: Byres Vase, now in the British Museum; Rome 1771 [photo: Ghent University Library].

5.2 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, The Drawbridge, from *Carceri*, second state, 1761, 553 mm × 412 mm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum [photo: Rijksmuseum Studio].

5.3 Diagram from MacDorman 2006. The caption of the

diagram reads as follows: 'The hypothesized emotional response of subjects is plotted against anthropomorphism of a robot, following Mori's statements. The uncanny valley is the region of negative emotional response towards robots that seem "almost". Movement amplifies the emotional response.'

5.4 Antonio Canova (1757–1822), *Pauline Borghese as Victorious Venus*, 1808, marble, Rome: Villa Borghese [photo: Fabrizio Garrisi/Wikimedia Commons].

5.5 Johann Zoffany (1733–1810), *Tribuna of the Uffizi,* with on the right the Venus de'Medici, 1772–1777, oil on canvas, 123.5 cm × 155 cm, Windsor: Royal Collection Trust [photo: Royal Collection Trust].

5.6 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *The Skeletons*, from *Grotteschi,* in or after 1747, 390 mm × 549 mm, Rome [photo: Rijksmuseum Studio].

5.7 Jean Grandjean (1752–1781), *Statue of Antinous Albania in the Capitoline Museum in Rome,* 1780, drawing, 535 mm × 405 mm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum [photo: Rijksmuseum Studio].

5.8 *Medusa Rondanini,* Roman copy after a fifth-century BC Greek original by Phidias, Munich: Glyptothek [photo: Carole Raddato/Wikimedia Commons].

5.9 James Gillray (1756–1815), *A Cognocenti* [sic] *contemplating ye Beauties of ye Antique,* depicting an elderly Sir William Hamilton inspecting his antiquities, among which we see the image of his wife several times, 1801, hand-coloured etching, 34.9 cm × 25.5 cm [photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum].

5.10 House of Dufour, Scene from the Psyché cycle, *c.* 1800, 215 cm × 182 cm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum [photo: Rijksmuseum Studio].

5.11 Hôtel de Beauharnais, Paris, Turkish Bath, 1803–6

[photo: Erich Lessing/AKG Images].

5.12 Charles de Wailly (1730–1798), design for the mirror drawing room of Palazzo Spinola, Genua, 1760s, pen and China ink, ink wash, on paper, 101 cm × 130 cm, Paris: Louvre [photo: Wikimedia Commons].

5.13 Anon., *Psyché*, mahogany, gilt bronze appliqués, and glass, *c.* 1800, Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs [photo: © Paris, Les Arts Décoratifs. Photo by Jean Tholance].

5.14 Antonio Canova [attr.], plaster moulding of Pauline Borghese's breast, *c.* 1808, Rome: Museo Napoleonico [photo: author].

5.15 Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot (1763–1850), cup in the shape of Pauline Borghese's breast, *c.* 1810, gilt bronze, Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs [photo: © Paris, Les Arts Décoratifs. Photo by Jean Tholance].

5.16 *Terracotta mastoid,* black-figure terracotta vase from Greece, ca. 500 BC. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Roger Fund, 1941 [photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York].

5.17 Manufacture royalle de Sèvres, designed by Jean-Jacques Lagrenée le Jeune (1739–1821) and Louis Simon Boizot (1743–1809), *Breast Bowl* from the Service for the Rambouillet Dairy, soft paste porcelain bowl and hard paste porcelain support, after 1787, Sèvres: Cité de la céramique [photo: © RMN-Grand Palais (Sèvres—Manufacture et musées nationaux)/ Martine Beck-Coppola].

5.18 Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot, sauce boat, gilt bronze, Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs [photo: Rijksmuseum Studio].

5.19 Nadar [Gaspard-Félix Tournachon], 1820–1910, photograph of Elizabeth, Comtesse de Greffulhe, in an

embroidered Princess-line evening gown by Jean-Philippe Worth and her Empire *Psyché,* 1896, Paris: Musée Galliéra [photo: Wikimedia Commons].

6.1 Jack Vanarsky (1936–2009), *Toporgraphie*, 1998, collection of the artist [photo: screenshot from a video by the author].

6.2 Wang Zi Won (1980–), *Eye Box*, 2007, private collection [photo: screenshot from a video by the author].

6.3 Antonio di Benintendi (ca. 1480–after 1529) (attr.), *Terracotta bust of Cardinal Giuliano de'Medici (later Pope Leo X*, *c.* 1512, London: Victoria & Albert Museum [photo: Wikimedia Commons].

6.4 Lifenaut, *BINA48,* social robot created using video interview transcripts, laser scanning life-mask technology, face recognition, artificial intelligence, and voice recognition technologies, from 2007 onwards [photo: screenshot from a video by the author].

6.5a Joseph Weizenbaum (1923–2008), *ELIZA,* screenshot from a conversation, unknown date [photo: Wikimedia Commons].

6.5b Norbert Landsteiner (dates unknown), mass:werk, *E.L.I.Z.A. Talking,* a project that embeds Weizenbaum's ELIZA program in modern browsers, started 2013 [photo: Norbert Landsteiner, via: https://www.masswerk.at/eliza/ (accessed 21 December 2019)].

6.6 Giovanni Bellini, *San Giobbe Altarpiece,* oil on panel, ca. 1487, Venice: Gallerie Accademia [photo: Didier Descouens/Wikimedia Commons].

6.7 *Florentine Niobids,* Roman copy of a Greek original by Scopas or Praxiteles, second half of the fourth century BCE, found in Rome in 1583 and brought to

Florence in 1775; seen here in the Sala della Niobe at the Uffizi, Florence [photo: Carole Raddato/Wikimedia Commons].

7.1 Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795) and Sons (manufacturer), 'Black Basalt' ware vase, *c.* 1815, imitating 'Etruscan' and Greek vase painting, Birmingham: Birmingham Museum of Art [photo: Sean Pathasema/Wikimedia Commons].

7.2 Furniture support: female sphinx with Hathor-style curls (Assyrian), eighteenth century BCE, Ivory, gold foil, 12.7 × 10.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art [photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York].

7.3 Charles Percier and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine, Frontispiece of Cahier VIII of *Palais, maisons, et autres edifices modernes, dessinés à Rome*, Paris [1798] [photo: Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris].

7.4 Charles Percier and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine, *Fauteuil et Vases executés à Paris dans la Maison du C.D.*, pl. 5 in *Recueil de décorations intérieures comprenant tout ce qui a rapport à l'ameublement…,* Paris 1801 [photo: Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris].

7.5 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Chimney Piece*, 1761–1769, white marble, 133 × 193 cm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum [photo: Rijksmuseum Studio].

7.6 Giovanni Battista. Piranesi, *Avanzi della Villa di Mecenate a Tivoli costruita da travertina a opera incerta* from *Vedute di Roma* (Ficacci 936) [ca. 1778], 445 × 665 mm [photo: Ghent University Library].

7.7 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Veduta della Villa dell'Em.o Sig.n Card. Alessandro Albani* from *Vedute di Roma*, Ficacci 960) [ca. 1778], 430 × 690 mm [photo: Ghent University Library].

7.8 Carlo Marchionni (1702–86), design for the North Portal of the Villa Albani, pen and brown ink, brush and crayon, grey wash, graphite on cream paper, 41.7 × 28.9 cm, *c.* 1750, New York: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum [photo: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum].

7.9 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vue des restes de la celle du Temple de Neptune* from *Différentes vues de Pesto*, Paris 1800–1809, 450 × 670 mm [photo: Ghent University Library].

7.10 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Base, tamburo di colonna e diversi frammenti* from *Trofeo o sia Magnifica Colonna Coclide* [ca. 1780], 480 × 700 mm [photo: Ghent University Library].

Figure 0.1 Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1770–1778), Marble Candelabrum, 353 cm high, made from various elements (Roman, fifteenth and eighteenth century, after a design by Piranesi. Acquired from his estate in 1815. Paris: Musée du Louvre.

Introduction

In the last decade of his life Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) created three colossal candelabra mainly from fragments of sculpture excavated near the Villa Hadriana in Tivoli, two of which are now in the Ashmolean Museum, one in the Louvre (Figures 0.1–0.3). Although they were among the most sought-after and prestigious of his works, and fetched enormous prices during Piranesi's life, they suffered a steep decline in appreciation from the 1820s onwards, and even today they are among the least studied of his works. In the Ashmolean and Louvre they have been demoted, one could say, from centre pieces in their displays of classical Antiquities to objects illustrating the history of taste and collecting. A biography of these candelabra will be the starting-point for an investigation of the intense investment, by artists, patrons, collectors, and the public around 1800 in objects that made Graeco-Roman Antiquity present again for them, by their design or style, by their presence and what we would now call their agency or materiality. It is about how these objects make their makers or viewers feel that they are again in the presence of Antiquity, that not only Antiquity has revived, but that classical statues become alive under their gaze; about what it takes to make such objects, and what it costs to own them; and about the anthropological and psychological ramifications of such intense if not excessive attachments to artefacts. In other words, this book takes a fresh look at what usually is called neoclassicism, and the neoclassical culture of collecting; but from a different perspective, because objects themselves, rather than the artists, patrons, or collectors are the point of departure here. A considerable part of the book focuses on Piranesi's candelabra because these strange, vivid, excessive objects lend themselves particularly well to such an inquiry. But this is not a book only about Piranesi.

Figure 0.2 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Marble Candelabrum, h. 300 cm, made from various elements (Roman, fifteenth and eighteenth century), after a design by Piranesi, with cranes. Acquired by Sir Roger Newdigate in 1774, donated to Oxford University in 1775. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum.

Figure 0.3 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Marble Candelabrum, h. 300 cm, made from various elements (Roman, fifteenth and eighteenth century), after a design by Piranesi, with elephants. Acquired by Sir Roger Newdigate in 1774, donated to Oxford University in 1775. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum.

Writing the biographies of these candelabra, and exploring the ramifications of their design and reactions they evoked will allow us to address two wider issues that are central to what may be called the emerging field of artefactual studies: human–thing entanglement and the origins of a style, considered here in the wider context of the survival of Graeco-Roman material culture.

In both archaeology and anthropology these issues have become central since the 1980s, often as part of the material turn. Art history, traditionally the discipline defined by close visual and material analysis of objects, has been surprisingly absent from this development and the debates it causes. One of the aims of this book is to offer a historical contribution to current debates in neighbouring disciplines about what is variously termed the life of objects, materiality, agency, or human–thing entanglement. The context in which this book will do so is that of the emergence of a new style. For a long time this was a central, if not the defining problem art history engaged with, but after the 1950s it disappeared from the art-historical agenda, to resurface now in archaeology, globalization studies, and anthropology.[1] Here I will argue that the desire to make Antiquity materially present played a major role in the emergence of the *Style Empire*, and of neoclassicism in a wider sense. For this to happen, two conditions needed to be met: the presence of a substantial amount of Graeco-Roman artefacts, surviving entirely or resurfacing in fragments; and a strong investment, emotional, artistic, and financial, in such attempts to make the absent past present again. Such attempts to bring back the past and converse with it, as Goethe would say, may at first sight look like a revival of the classical ekphrastic ideal of bring before the eyes what is described, which was nourished by the desire, as Philostratus put it in his *Heroicus*, to be with the past, in what he called *sunousia*, literally a being together. Yet as this book will argue, although the ekphrastic tradition was alive and well, as is shown for instance by Goethe's translation of Philostratus' *Eikones* or Diderot's earlier attempts to recreate the presence of paintings before the mind's eye of viewers far away from the Paris Salons he described, a fundamental difference emerges in Piranesi's work: such attempts at bringing back the presence of the past are no longer textual ventures, but take objects as their chosen vehicle.[2]

In this book the term 'human–thing entanglement' will be used as a general, fairly neutral term to refer to the emotional, psychological or artistic investment of humans in things.[3] In the decades around 1800, if mentioned at all, it often began to be

labelled in terms such as fetishism, taken from the emerging discipline of anthropology. Unlike many of the theorists of human–thing entanglement today, I do not subscribe to the view that in some way, objects can act in a way similar to that of living beings. They *appear* to act, but their behaviour is not guided by intentionality, and instead is subject to the laws of causality. But at the same time we see all the time that people are involved with objects in ways very similar to their engagement with other living beings. The challenge such behaviour poses to a historical discipline such as art history or archaeology is twofold. First, to understand the historical circumstances and conditions of particular situations in which such interactions, now often labelled the agency of things, unfold. Agency, like human–thing entanglement, is always situational and historically determined; a matter of attribution if not projection, not of inherent qualities of the objects involved. But at the same time, the psychological traits active in such entanglements are not as historically determined, because the human mind does not change so quickly. Therefore this book will also draw on two major issues in recent psychology: accounts of the attribution of human traits to objects, or what developmental psychologists call 'anthropomorphism'; and theory of mind: the capacity of humans to infer psychological states, ideas, and desires in other living beings that may be different from their own. This is the capacity that grounds empathy, but also feeds into the tendency to attribute mental states and human characteristics to objects.

0.1 A Changing Objectscape

Rome in the period 1770–1800 offers a particularly suitable laboratory to consider human–thing entanglement and style development.[4] At the moment the candelabra were created and travelled to their final destinations in these years, what archaeologists have begun to call the objectscapes of Rome and Paris changed dramatically, as a result, first, of the renewal in excavation campaigns, for instance at Tivoli, that led to a significant increase in artefacts, statues, vases, sarcophagi, etc.

available on the art market.[5] Second, the increasing financial and political instability of the 1780s and 1790s resulted in a number of major collections coming up for sale: the Doria-Pamphilij and Giustiniani collections for instance, of which important parts would ultimately find a new home in Wilhelm von Humboldt's brain child, the Altes Museum in Berlin. In the 1780s and 90s several great French collections would follow: those of the Duc d'Orléans for instance, not to mention those of the French royal family. Also, collections from countries conquered by Napoleon started to travel: for instance the major collection of Indian and Indonesian artefacts formed by the Princes of Orange, whose arrival in Paris caused major debates about the aesthetic status of these objects, and where they should be housed: as works of art in the Louvre, as curiosities in the Cabinet des Médailles, or as ethnographic objects in the new Museum of Natural History in the Jardin des Plantes.[6] The arrival of large numbers of Egyptian artefacts led to similar discussions.

Collecting habits also changed, most conspicuously and influentially in the Villa Albani, where Winckelmann wrote his *History of the Art of Antiquity*.[7] The Giustiniani and Borghese collections, the most prestigious ones in seventeenth-century Rome, were formed almost exclusively of Greek statues or the Roman copies taken to be Greek originals, and their display in the family Palazzo or Villa served to exhibit the wealth and taste of the families involved. Cardinal Albani had a villa built for the purpose of housing his collection, and unlike his sixteenth- and seventeen-century predecessors, he did not limit himself to Graeco-Roman antiquities from the Greek and Roman heartland, but also welcomed significant numbers of objects from the borders of the Empire, or from older cultures such as Etruria or Egypt.

Thus new objectscapes emerged, in which the traveller, collector, or art lover was able to wander around in a totally new environment, peopled by objects, newly visible, on display and for sale, that had been hidden away from most viewers in private collections, visible only in dim conditions in churches or sanctuaries, covered in sand and rubble, or inaccessible simply because of the distance. All this happened in a period of fifty

years that preceded the great age of the new museums and art galleries, built to display the national artistic patrimony to the public at large. In this period Rome and Paris became the stage for an unprecedented concourse of objects; a peak in connectivity, as archaeologists today would say, that radically changed the range of things to be seen, and by implication viewing habits and design trends as well. Museums however act as very potent framing devices: in them artworks are framed by their showcases, selection and sequence or arrangement of objects, and the decoration of their rooms. Whereas one could think they would favour the unmediated presence of artefacts, they in fact stage and interpret it and thereby create mediated settings for viewing.

The emergence of these new objectscapes also gave the final blow to the humanist approach to the study of the past, that considered texts as the major source and evidence for knowledge of the past. The French archaeologist, art theorist and critic Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755–1849) for instance described the Eternal City itself, with its monuments, statues, trophies, mausolea, or aquaducts, as the material book from which its history could be read.[8] Its stone pages risked however, by the dispersal of its art works across Europe, to be torn out at random and scattered to the winds. But the fatal blow to the traditional textual approach was dealt by the relentless discovery or arrival of unknown artefacts, which forced antiquarians, archaeologists, and art historians to close their handbooks and treatises, and pay close attention to the evidence in front of their eyes. The confrontation with the Doric ruins at Paestum, the oldest surviving Greek temple ruins in Italy, forced succeeding waves of visitors, from Soufflot to Piranesi, Chambers, and Soane, to radically rethink conventional opinions about the development of classical architecture, and ultimately to question the value of Greek architecture as a model for contemporary design. When we look, to give another example, at the way in which Piranesi depicts the ruins of Paestum, the Lago Albano, Tivoli, or the pedestal of the Column of Antoninus Pius, near the Corso, and compare this with sixteenth- or seventeenth-century representations of such monuments, it becomes evident how

much his etchings convey the material presence of these ruins; their very material nature, the incursion of time upon their pristine integrity, but also their stubborn endurance (Figures 0.4 and 0.5).

Figure 0.4 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Pedestal of the Column of Antoninus Pius in Piazza Colonna [actually a column erected by Marcus Aurelius], from *Trofeo o sia Magnifica Colonna Coclide di marmo*, 595 × 835 mm, Paris: n.p., 1800–1809.

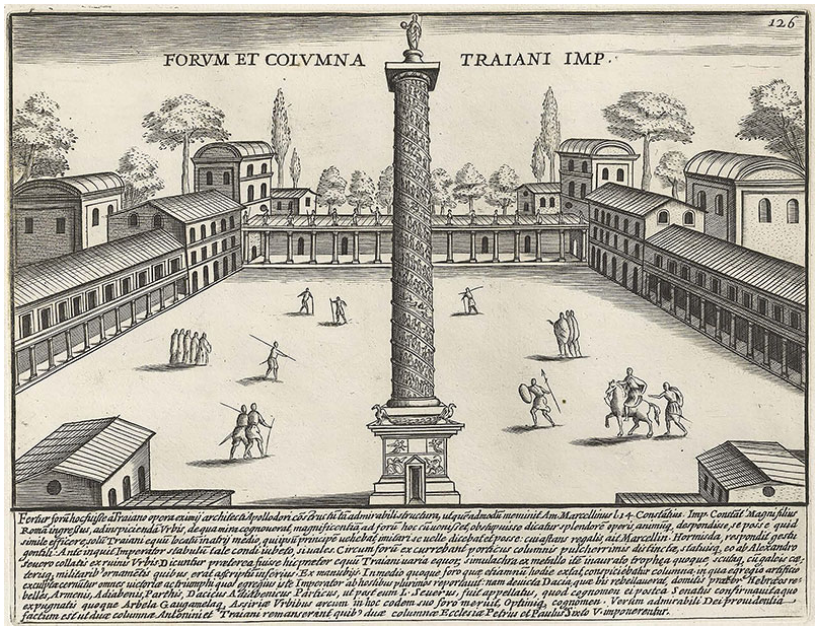

Figure 0.5 Domenico de'Rossi after Jacobo Lauro (1659–1730), *Forum et Columna Antonini*, from *Romanae Magnitudinis Monumenta*, Rome 1699, engraving, 147 × 233 mm.

Piranesi's etchings are the paper equivalent of the stone leaves in the book of Roman antiquities Quatremère tried to preserve. They convey, in other words, the material presence of these remote, ancient antiquities. But what does this mean? How could the oxymoron of a material presence of an absent past be resolved? This book argues that through various techniques and strategies of representation and appropriation, and in various scenarios of human–thing entanglement, a material presence was evoked and sometimes achieved. Restoration, the trophy, and the incorporation of antique fragments, would all be used as artefactual strategies to achieve this, in tandem with new settings and stagings of display. All these could only work because they activated innate human tendencies to animate the inanimate and to attribute human traits to artefacts or animals.

0.2 Human–Thing Entanglement and Neoclassicism, *c.* 1800

At the same time, the many artists, writers, historians, and critics staying in Rome in this period produced a unique range of primary sources that testifies to their intense investment in the artefacts that populated the emergent new objectscape. Their writings allow us to observe at close range, and in a variety of situations, from excavations to restoration, collecting and new creations, how new attitudes towards what we would now call the material culture of Graeco-Roman Antiquity took shape. In particular, they suggest that we fundamentally rethink conventional views of neoclassicism as the latest in a series of revivals of Classical art based on a model of imitation and emulation, driven chiefly by aesthetic ideals.[9]

When Goethe for instance finally arrived in Rome in November 1786, after fleeing from Karlsbad, and tearing through Austria and Northern Italy, he exclaimed that a new life had begun, now that he could finally see, with his own eyes, what he had dreamed about for so long:

> All the dreams of my youth I now see before me, alive…and everything I had known already for a long time, in paintings and drawings, plaster and cork, stands now together in front of me.[10]

He added: 'When Pygmalion's Elise…at last came to him and said 'It is me!', how different was the living person from the sculpted stone.'[11] It would become a recurrent theme in the *Italian Journey* and related works such as the *Römische Elegien*: the living presence of the statues, buildings and art works of Antiquity, which enabled Goethe to enter into a dialogue with them, as he would exclaim to Frau von Stein: 'You know how the presence of things speaks to me, and all day I am in a conversation with things'.[12] Just as for Winckelmann before him, for many contemporaries of Goethe seeing classical art in Rome, *in situ* and with their own eyes, was an intense revelation. Goethe uses the religious language of Epiphany. Ten years later the French archaeologist and art critic Quatremère de Quincy would

speak, in equally religious terms, of how the ancient world would be brought back from the underworld, and of the 'general resurrection of the tribe of antique statues, whose population increases with every passing day'.[13] Usually such statements are taken as records of the vision that inspired these artists and historians to imitate the ancients to become, as Winckelmann put it, inimitable and thereby truly modern. But Goethe's accounts should make us pause. There is more to them than a record of the inspirational first view of Roman art. The living presence of Antiquity is revealed to him: their presence speaks to him, and the dead stones are transformed, like Pygmalion's statue, into living beings.

Now instead of dismissing such reactions as mere clichés, figures of speech and metaphors, I will argue in this book that they deserve to be taken seriously, because they point to a set of beliefs, if not a *dispositif imaginaire*, that had very new ramifications: the living presence of classical art all these writers attest to, is a material presence. The art works that will play a central role in this book exemplify this living material presence: what stands out in Piranesi's colossal candelabra is the insistence with which their maker tried to convey the impression of life. The involvement of artists, critics, collectors, and historians in the decades around 1800 with material remains of Antiquity often sounds uncannily like what we would now call cases of human–thing entanglement.

Such entanglement, this book argues, was one of the factors driving a set of phenomena that have become so familiar, such set pieces of Western artistic and museum culture, that we have forgotten how strange they really are. They all have to do with what is usually called the revival of classical art, or the appropriation of Graeco-Roman forms to create new styles such as the *Style Empire*; and with what is normally labelled as collecting classical art, a perfectly normal pursuit, but one which, as I hope to show, raises very interesting psychological and anthropological issues. To set the stage, I will discuss a few instances of these phenomena to show that what is usually called the revival of classical art around 1800 is not just the final gasp of that Western recurring phenomenon, a return to the art of

Greece and Rome; nor is it simply a question of creating a style; nor of artistic choice and aesthetic preference, often combined with political agendas. The material presence of the object, its agency, or what we might call its materiality—although these terms are names of problems rather than clearly defined concepts —play a very important role in what happens to them, their creation, excavation, or entering into a collection, in other words, the cultural biography of the artefacts that together make up the neoclassical style.

0.2.1 In the Presence of Antiquity, at Last

When Goethe arrived in Rome, he was enchanted by the presence of the Graeco-Roman statues and buildings he had read so much about, and had studied in engravings and drawings, but had never before seen with his own eyes, let alone touched them with his own hands. In the *Roman Elegies* he evokes how the actual, tactile presence of statues makes him both a better poet and a more inspired lover, and how the uninterrupted presence and observation of these statues gives him the sensation of entering in a dialogue with them.[14] After his return from Rome he would recall this experience of living presence full of nostalgia, for instance in one of the Mignon poems: 'Marble statues stand here, and gaze at me.'[15]

This awareness of, and close attention to the presence of Graeco-Roman art works ties in with what may be called the empirical turn in eighteenth-century art history and aesthetics. In 1748 James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, two young Englishmen who had travelled on foot to Rome to study painting and architecture, went to Naples. The sight of the excavations at Herculaneum, as well viewing the excavation of the Obelisk buried in the rubble on Piazza Montecitorio, which Stuart drew and published, inspired them to undertake an expedition to Athens. The prospectus they circulated in Rome in 1748 may well be considered as one of the founding documents of the new discipline of scientific archaeology, based on autopsy of the objects themselves. Visual documentation, based not on

assumptions proceeding from systems or textual traditions, but on their own observations, would be the core of their project:

> For the best verbal descriptions cannot be supposed to convey so adequate an Idea, of the magnificence and elegance of Buildings; the fine form, expression, or proportion of sculptures; the beauty and variety of a Country, or the exact Scene of any celebrated Action, as may be formed from drawings made on the spot, with diligence and fidelity, by the hand of an Artist.[16]

Their endorsement of first-hand sensory experience as the basis of historical knowledge is very close to the revelation which Edward Gibbon recorded when sitting at dusk in the Colosseum. This was the moment when he conceived the idea of writing a history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Not reading about the ancients, but the persistence of the material remains of the Roman past, seeing their monuments and the awareness of the past is what gave him access to history.[17]

Whereas for Stuart and Revett or Gibbon being in the presence of Roman or Greek antiquities was above all a matter of how to do architectural history, or of how to write a new history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, or possibly of living through historical sensations, for Goethe this presence had developed into something entirely different: a direct, emotional engagement with Roman statues, in which their presence leads to an unmediated sense of access and even conversation—almost as if these stones and statues had become living persons.

0.2.2 Torchlight Visits

Johann Gottfried Herder had already argued in the 1770s that close, attentive viewing of statues could result in their animation, for the primitive as well as for the cultivated spectator; but also that such intense conversation with objects, to recall Goethe, also transposes us back into the times of their creation:

> No matter how linear and foursquare it may appear to the eye of

> the artist, the first impressions made by art are awe, verging on terror, and a shudder, feelings which make the work appear to move and come to life. This is particularly the case with half-savage peoples who are completely alive and who respond only to movement and feeling. For this reason, all savages and half-savages recognize statues as animate and daemonic; the spirit and the divine are made present, above all, when they pray to a statue in the silence of the sacred twilight and wait to hear it speak in answer. Even today, we can experience a feeling of this sort in a quiet museum or a coliseum of gods and heroes; if we are alone and approach the statues with devotion, they can, unnoticed, come to life and carry us back to the times in which everything that now exists only as mythology and statues was a living truth.[18]

This sense of living presence, of statues coming alive and gazing at the viewer with seeing eyes, is even more insistent in the many accounts of torchlight viewing parties in the Vatican, the Museo Pio-Clementino or the Villa Medici. Torchlight sculpture visits enjoyed a brief but intense fashion in the decades around 1800 in Italy, Germany, and France. They probably originated in the Villa Albani, and may have been started by Winckelmann, although an older tradition already existed in Rome of organizing sculpture viewing parties, for instance as part of banquets held in the early sixteenth century on the Campidoglio. Also, art students often worked at night, in artificially lit studios, as documented by Joseph Wright of Derby's scene of art students copying a Venus Pudica by night (Figure 0.6).

Figure 0.6 Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–97), *Academy by Lamplight*, oil on canvas, *c.* 1768–69, New Haven: Yale Centre for British Art.

These visits can be related to the profound change Winckelmann made to guided art tours: instead of Ciceroni reciting lists of facts about the art works, he tried to make his public engage emotionally and aesthetically with the statues. That this was a clear break with normal behaviour is recorded by

his associate Johann Jacob Volkmann, who observed that 'The papal guards stood there with open mouths completely astonished, and maybe thought that the malaria had disturbed his brains.'[19] By the end of the eighteenth century visits by night were made to sculptors' studios, but above all to sculpture collections, at the Vatican Belvedere, the Villa Borghese, or the Musée Napoléon. Canova recommended them because torchlight enables the viewer to appreciate the 'gradazione della carne', the subtlety of the handling of the marble surface, much better than the even light of day. Goethe gives a very precise analysis in the *Italian Journey* of the advantages of viewing statues at night, by means of a source of light one can direct, and which is much more constant than natural light. It enables the viewer for instance to observe much clearer how the sculptor conveyed the suggestion of a skin surface covering muscles and bones. Other accounts are less technical, but much more revealing of the effect of these sessions. The German poet and art theorist Heinrich Meyer describes in his Italian journal how 'Apollo comes alive and seems to glide down from his pedestal and raise his proud, ever youthful head to dissipate the ancient night of chaos'.[20] In these viewing parties spectators were brought into direct contact with statues that appeared to be alive, to move and to be able to see them thanks to the flickering, enlivening effect of the moving torches.

0.2.3 Talismans

Living among antiquities in Rome and having them literally at hand could also lead to interactions and experiences that were suffused with emotion. In 1810 Wilhelm von Humboldt, the Prussian ambassador to the Vatican, had to leave Rome to return to his native Berlin and family manor at Tegel. He asked Gérando, at the time in charge of Papal antiquities, for permission to take with him a classical relief, the so-called 'Parzen-Rilievo'. Here the presence which an artefact could evoke was actively sought, and the relief almost became a talisman. As Humboldt put it: 'If you conceive, as you certainly should, what a

consolation such a souvenir offers in a country where one is completely separated from antiquity….[21] With Humboldt and his wife Caroline things went much further than such transportation of Roman fragments, which we might simply consider as a variety of souvenir collecting. They had slices carved out of fragments of the Obelisco Sallustiano, which had been standing at the top of the Spanish Steps, to integrate them into new, classicizing coffee tables for their country house at Tegel near Berlin, thus integrating actual Roman fragments into new, neoclassical furniture.

Such behaviour may seem very strange to us, for psychological as well as for archaeological or artistic reasons. There is a paradox at work here: precisely by appropriating the fragment and inserting it into a new work, antiquity can be restored and made present again. One way in which this imaginative, hermeneutical effort manifested itself was the brief vogue, from 1770 to 1820, to incorporate, appropriate and transform ancient fragments into new artefacts that would both keep intact their origins and ancient aura, but also give them a new lease of life in a new context. Hence, the tendency, not to say frenzy, from Sir John Soane's Museum in London to Schloß Tegel near Berlin, to acquire as many antique fragments as possible and incorporate them into new artefacts. Hence also Piranesi's drive to unearth rubble from the swamp at Pantanello, and reuse the fragments that recalled the religious rituals of the Romans into new Graeco-Roman Imperial artefacts. Needless to say, this urge to make absent antiquity present again through an appropriation of its material remains would be driven out by the representational devices of the museum and the art gallery, which would also attempt to make antiquity present, but once removed, put at a distance in a showcase.

We seem to have strayed a long way from Piranesi's candelabra. But these works, their vividness, the powers attributed to Piranesi by his contemporaries to give the appearance of life to stone and etching ink, and the intense attachments their maker, collectors and owners formed to them, are part of the complex of ideas, ambitions and desires outlined here. These illustrate the power attributed to objects around 1800

to create the presence of absent antiquities—remote in time or space. In the decades around 1800 such a desire, I will argue, was one of the major driving forces behind the creation of the modern art gallery and museum in Rome, Paris, Berlin, and London. Their collections were created, curated and opened to the public not only out of historical, dynastic, national, stylistic or aesthetic concerns—the conventional view—but also because of a new awareness that objects and not texts are best capable of making present the past. As William Hazlitt said in 1826, 'History is vague and shadowy, but sculpture gives life and body to it.'[22] His contemporary Antoine-Chrysostôme Quatremère de Quincy, the first to develop a consistent theory of what we would now call cultural heritage, wrote in his *Letters to Miranda* of 1796,

> The real museum of Rome…is made up of statues, colossal figures, temples, obelisks, triumphal columns, baths, stadia…fragments of ornaments, construction materials, furniture, utensils, and so on.[23]

The material turn, one could argue, did not start in the 1990s among anthropologists and archaeologists, but took place in the late eighteenth century. By this I do not want to suggest that the artists, collectors or critics quoted had the same agenda as many proponents of the material turn at present. They did not look for an alternative to structuralism in anthropology, the focus on cultures as systems of signs, or shared today's doubts about the usefulness of notions such as art or beauty when understanding material culture. But what they do share is the readiness to take the power of objects to act on their viewers, users or makers as the starting-point for studying human material culture and the development of styles.

To understand how the power to make absent antiquities present again was attributed to objects, and the desire to master that power felt by their owners, in all its contentiousness, we will start by looking at the things themselves. In particular we have to consider their life: the trajectory from their creation, sometimes in antiquity, sometimes in the eighteenth century, through submergence in ruins, emergence in excavations, restoration, appropriation by collectors, and transformations in the hands of their new owners, not in the least from objects with a ritual or

political function and role to art works to be exhibited in museum settings. But we also have to look at the relations between these objects and those involved with them: their excavators, restorers, recreators, owners, and curators, to understand how this strange and apparently irrational and counterfactual belief could arise—that objects can make something present that is evidently no longer there. Why would a rational person like Wilhelm von Humboldt, the embodiment of German *Bildung*, ask the Pope for permission to take a relief with him from Rome to Berlin, as a talisman that would somehow make Rome present under the grey skies of Tegel?

0.3 The Material Turn *c.* 1800 and the Emergence of a New Style

The series of developments and events sketched here, which all happened around 1800, together created a singular moment in Western art history that I would call the precursor, in many respects, of the material turn that started in the social sciences and humanities in the 1990s. There is the dramatic increase of connectivity with its stream of objects travelling across the world; political upheaval combined with a sudden increase in globalization; a sudden awareness of the importance of the object as a major constituent of culture; as well as a complete rethinking of the status of an art work, and why it should be accorded to some art works, but not to others. Another similarity with the present material turn is the prominence of human–thing entanglement. As briefly sketched here, it manifested itself in the period 1770–1820 in a variety of ways, in collecting, making and owning things. At present, in the work of prominent advocates of the material turn such as Chris Gosden, Dan Hicks, Ian Hodder, or Bjørnar Olsen, human–thing entanglement serves as the stimulus to rethink the role of artefacts in shaping human culture. Just as these authors argue against the preceding linguistic turn that considered everything to be a text, and to be amenable to interpretations based on language, around 1800 historians of art, archaeologists, and artists, turned away from the textual,

philological humanist approach to culture, to engage with objects.

The profoundly changed objectscapes that emerged in Rome and Paris around 1800 led to what we might call a precursor of the present day's material turn. It enabled, or in some cases forced, those who dwelled in these new landscapes, to rethink the relation between the present and the past, and the ways in which absent antiquities could be made present again—not in texts, nor by means of the literary culture of rhetorical imitation and emulation, but by handling the artefacts of Graeco-Roman or Egyptian antiquity and restoring, recreating, appropriating and transforming them. The resulting, changed objectscapes played a major role in the origins of new styles such as the *Style Empire* in the 1790s and 1800s, and force us to rethink traditional accounts of the emergence of that style.[24] Put more provocatively, what the material turn advocates do, is completely undermine, if not ignore, the traditional precedence given in art history to high art, singular, unique works of exceptional aesthetic value, created by unique individuals of genius as the main actors in stylistic change, whether it is the creation of a new style or the revival of an historical one. Material turn advocates also completely overturn, or ignore, the traditional distinction between unique artworks created by artists of genius and the artefacts that make up material culture, which are utilitarian, often mass-produced, and by anonymous makers. They do so, because they see artefacts primarily, as Alfred Gell did, as the material constituents of the networks of relations both between humans, and between humans and things, that together form a society.[25] In this perspective, artefacts are actors just as persons are, and can become part of the same kind of entanglements as persons with other persons. One major implication of this argument is that style development can no longer be considered as an autonomous process, determined to a large degree by formal and artistic criteria. Instead, in the perspective of the material turn, style formation is no longer an artistic development, but an anthropological issue. It is not restricted to the Western classical tradition, but a global phenomenon, and documented from the fifth millennium BCE.[26]

In taking an object-centred perspective this book therefore ties in with the emergent paradigm in the social sciences and humanities usually called the material turn. But rather than contributing yet another definition or elucidation, its chief aim is to add an historical and artefactual dimension. It reconstructs the conditions and circumstances at a particular moment in time and place in which objects were believed to act on those involved with them as makers, owners, patrons, or viewers; and by extension, to understand how such powers were conceived at the time. And since this is an art-historical inquiry as well, this book will pay close attention to the features of the objects that afforded, to use James Gibson's term, such attribution of agency.[27] It is a contribution to artefactual knowledge because it considers the revival of Graeco-Roman art around 1800 from this object-centred perspective. In other words, it tries to rethink style formation as an anthropological phenomenon, part of a very old and global feature of human culture, and not as an exclusively artistic development, closely tied up with the artistic theory of imitation and emulation as taught by the Academies, and the canonic status of Graeco-Roman art as the classic backbone of Western art.

A major reason for departing from the traditional account of the development of Neo-Classicism in terms of imitation and emulation of canonical works, is that works produced around 1800 do not really look, on close inspection, like the models they appear to imitate.[28] Canova's Venus Borghese for instance (Figure 5.4) may look at first sight like a supine version of the Praxitelean prototype, but on closer inspection reveals significant departures in the treatment of the marble surface, anatomy, and in its genesis in *moulage à vif*. Such features, but in particular the transformation of marble into the surface of a living body, were already in the late eighteenth century considered by French sculpture theorists such as Claude-Henri Watelet to be evidence of the superiority of the Moderns over the Ancients.[29] The case of Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, the main shapers of the *Style Empire*, is even more revealing. They chose as their models not the canonical works of Classical Greece, but architectural ornament and interior decoration of the Hadrianic period,

generally considered at the time as a period of decadence. Piranesi's candelabra, as we will see in Chapter 1, are another case in point. Consisting partly of fragments excavated at the Villa Hadriana, and partly of his own inventions, they were nonetheless hailed, on the arrival of two of them in Oxford, as the prime specimens of all that is admirable and deserving of imitation in Classical art.

In developing a new, object-centred account of style formation this book builds on the recent work by archaeologists such as Tonio Hölscher, Ann Feldman, or Miguel John Versluys, on style revivals and the mechanisms driving them. They have shown that these are not an exclusive Western early modern and modern phenomenon; instead they began c. 1000 BCE in Egypt and the Middle East. Augustus revived Archaic sculpture, Hadrian both Archaic and Egyptian styles, and Napoleon Egyptian and Augustan styles. They have also shown that stylistic revivals are often guided by a semantics of power, legitimacy, and the desire to create new cultural memories. According to this new account objects, technology, and materials need to be present for their style to be revived. That is, we need to reconstruct objectscapes to understand how style formation works. But contexts also need to be constructed: successor state behaviour for instance is a very important factor in successive revivals of Graeco-Roman styles, from Augustus to Donald Trump. Above all, and that is the element sometimes missing in archaeological object-oriented accounts of style formation and revival, we need to understand the role of the artefactual features of objects played in style formation, what in daily language we would call their design. Put slightly differently, Piranesi experts such as Pierluigi Panza or Alvaro Gonzáles-Palacios have reconstructed how his etchings and artefacts were bought, copied, collected, and exhibited across Europe, thus forming the material backbone of neoclassicism.[30] Intellectual historians such as Lola Kantor-Kazovsky have shown how his ideas and work grew from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century debates about the scientific character of history writing versus antiquarianism, or the battle between the Ancients and the Moderns.[31] But what has not been done, is try to understand what features of these objects had such an impact, exercised such

an agency, that collectors were ready to pay stupendous sums for them, that they were hailed as the supreme instances of Roman sculpture and artistry, and copied and imitated from the USA to Russia.

0.4 The Argument of This Book

Monographs devoted to one aspect of Piranesi's work are comparatively rare, since Piranesi studies until recently operated largely through research articles and exhibition catalogues.[32] Recently innovating studies were published by Lola Kantor-Kazovsky on his position as an historian of architecture, vis à vis antiquarians and archaeologists; by Francesco Nevola on the understudied *Grotteschi*, producing much new evidence on his training as a painter and the iconography of his figurative work; Mario Bevilacqua published the Modena notebooks, providing many new insights in the process from a first sketch of a site to the finished etchings; Heather Hyde Minor produced the first monograph on his late writings, chief among them the *Diverse Maniere* and *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*; Pierluigi Panza identified and traced most of the artefacts made in Piranesi's studio, or Museo; and the recent discovery of almost 200 drawings in Karlsruhe, that can be attributed either to Piranesi or to his studio, have thrown much new light on his later years.[33] But the candelabra, despite their sheer size, unique design, costliness, and excessive character, remain understudied. Here they are the starting-point for a series of inquiries into the many ramifications suggested by them, as numerous as the parts they are made of. The first two chapters concentrate on the candelabra themselves, presenting their biography, and a brief survey of the history of this type of lamp. In Chapter 3 the desire to make antiquity materially present is contextualised, first in the paper context of their first publication, in the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi* of 1778, where they are juxtaposed with objects from the entire Mediterranean region, Egypt and the Near East, which Piranesi had seen in the ethnographical collections of the Museo Borgiano and Museo Kircheriano. This also suggests that the candelabra are

part of his ongoing attempt to recreate the material culture of Roman religion.

In Chapter 4 we turn to a different kind of context: that of trophies, totems, and other ritual objects, suggested by strong formal resemblances and similarities in subject matter and composition. One of the most striking aspects of the candelabra is the overwhelming presence of animal features, presented in a very lively and lifelike manner: leonine paws, rams' heads, elephants, birds that are a hybrid crossing of storks and ibises. This chapter seeks to understand whether there is an implicit logic that generates such combinations of the animal, vegetal, and mineral, of conventional iconography and a very personal mythology. While there is no historical connection, since these artefacts only arrived in the United States and Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, thinking about candelabra in terms of the theories developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Pierre Francastel about totem poles as ways of appropriating the agency of the animals depicted, and suggesting animal pedigrees to human societies does help to grasp some elements in the interest of Roman society as well as by Piranesi in these insistent, and very distinctive, animal presences.

Where Chapter 4 looked at the presence of animals in the candelabra, Chapter 5 pursues the issue of animation, in the sense of suggesting stone is animate. Piranesi's contemporaries often commented on his almost uncanny ability to give life to inanimate stone and etching plates, and to infuse the dead stones of Roman ruins with a new living presence. This brings us to yet another fascinating aspect of the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*: Piranesi's consistent effort to endow his creations with the appearance of life; to animate them. I want to place this effect of Piranesi's work in a historical context of changes *c*. 1800 in the appreciation of the living presence suggested by art works, as well as in the cultures and conventions of viewing sculptures. In spite of much evidence about viewers' emotional involvement with objects, which often manifested itself in claims of, or behaviour suggesting that these were animate, this phenomenon does not figure very much, or at all, in artistic literature of the period. Fortunately there are other ways of approaching this

issue. Agency is not a static event, but a situation. To understand it, we have to consider not the artwork in isolation—in a museum vitrine for instance—nor static sets of relations between those involved in an artefact's agency, but the situations, and their dynamics, in which agency manifests itself.

In this chapter a series of such situations will be considered which display the capacity of objects to act on persons, to make them enter into emotional relations with them, and to become intensely entangled with artefacts or art works. It will look at situations where viewers tried to make objects replace living beings, endow art works with life, become fascinated or immersed in the fictional worlds they afford, and become emotionally entangled with them, prefiguring what recently has been labelled as human–thing entanglement. These cases illustrate the psychological counterpart to the material efforts discussed in previous chapters to make Antiquity present again. The resulting immersive relationship with art works that were made in a conscious attempt to bring back classical art, is characteristic of Empire art; its handles, covers, lids, and pedestals thematize embodiment itself. They tell us much about the intense investment in objects, particularly those from the Graeco-Roman past, that is so characteristic of neoclassicism.

Chapter 6 returns to the issue of lifelikeness and animation, to untangle a few strands in the varieties of human–thing entanglement discussed here in the light of recent research inspired by the Uncanny. Drawing on the research into perceptual attribution mechanisms by Albert Michotte, Fritz Heider and Marianne Simmel, and Gabriela Airenti, this chapter develops an analysis of such emotional or even bodily investment in art, of such excessive varieties of human–thing entanglement, that lifts them out of the realm of art-historical anecdote, and provides at least the rudiments for not only an artistic but also a psychological account of these emotional and physical investments in art.

One of the intriguing features of the uncanny is that it is very often associated with architecture, and that it summarizes much of the mental process considered in this chapter: the suggestion of movement sets up an interactive situation with the viewer, in

which movement, or the representation of arrested movement that at any moment might spring into action, leads to a series of reactions or inferences in the viewer. Intentions, motives, emotions, and actions, and sometimes a character or even a biography, are attributed to the object. This is not just a poetical flight of fancy, or culturally conditioned conventional art talk. As the experiments by Michotte, Himmler and Seidler, and Arienti have shown, such attribution of animation, intentionality, and emotion is rooted in innate dispositions and concepts that infants can already exercise when they are less than twelve months old, and which are based on the human tendency to assume causality, intentionality, and will on the basis of kinetics, that is to attribute such mental features to moving objects.

Considering such entanglement in the light of the work of Michotte and Arienti makes one thing very clear, however: it is very normal *to act as if* objects, when they move or appear to be able to move, in an autonomous way, are motivated by intentions and emotions. But it would be quite abnormal to *actually think* they do so. And it is precisely in this space, opened up by the distinction between acting as if and believing, and constituted as an interaction between object and viewer, that artistic human—thing entanglement can both unfold and be understood: as an exchange between objects whose design leads the viewer to engage with them, and to attribute to them mental states, as if they were animate. Such an approach, therefore, enables us to understand what goes on in the viewer, but also to analyse the design, that is, the role of style, in such engagement. It aids to understand whence derives the intense investment in particular objects that is such an important element, in the formation of style. Where Chapter 5 looked at the historical context of human–thing entanglement *c*. 1800, Chapter 6 puts this in the wider context of the psychological underpinnings of such attributions and attachments in the general make-up of the human mind. Thus for all its historical particularities, they are exemplary of a more general, and older human tendency. That they manifested themselves so forcibly *c*. 1800 probably has to do with the acute sense of being cut off from the past as a result of the French Revolution, while at the same time the amount of

Greco-Roman objects available was larger than ever before.

In the last chapter the afterlife of the candelabra and related objects from Piranesi's Museo in interior design *c*. 1800 is illustrated. Their influence on interior design in Europe and beyond was enormous, and can be traced from Britain to Russia. One could even, in an essay in cultural epidemiology, chart the spread across Europe of these artefacts on the dissemination, through books and prints, of the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi*, and *Diverse Maniere*, and thereby draw a new map of the emergence and spread of the *Style Empire* based on the dissemination of artefacts and images. By writing the biography of the candelabra and related objects, and reconstructing the context of their rediscovery, restoration, revivals, and adaptations, this book argues that style development can no longer be considered as an autonomous process, determined to a large degree by formal and artistic criteria. Instead the emergence of a style is no longer an artistic question, but an anthropological issue, involving both the presence of particular objects, a particular set of historical circumstances, but also depending on a wider set of features of the human mind. This book is therefore a contribution towards the development of that new, emerging field, in which anthropology, archaeology and art history, the three disciplines concerned with the object, work together: the field of artefactual knowledge.

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[1] For a survey of recent debates about style see the introduction by Jas Elsner to Hölscher 2004; Neer 2005; Hvattum 2018, and Versluys 2016: 185–241.

[2] For *sunousia* in Philostratus' *Heroicus* see 4.11, 7.1, 4.10, 5.1, and 9.7. I am much indebted to James Porter's unpublished paper 'Statue Fever in the *Heroicus*', which he kindly allowed me to use. See Whitmarsh 2013:

101–22 and Kim 2010 for further discussion of Philostratus' text.

[3] On human–thing entanglement see Hicks 2010: 25–98; Hodder 2014, 2012; Olsen 2010. For a more critical view see Lindström 2015.

[4] See the survey offered in Brook and Curzi 2010 and Nicassio 2005.

[5] For a recent survey of excavation and trade data see Bignamini and Hornsby 2004. On the emerging concept of the objectscape see Versluys 2017: 191–201 and Pitt 2018.

[6] On the fate of the Orange collections in Paris, and debates about the status of non-western artefacts see Laissus 2004; Daugeron 2009: 39–40, 74, 76–9; Dias 1991, and Mersmann 2012.

[7] See Winckelmann 1986: 53–8 and 69–115; Allroggen-Bedel 1982: 301–81.

[8] Quatremère de Quincy 2012: 101. On the shift away from texts to objects as the main evidence about the past see Miller 2017: 97–123.

[9] See Dönike 2011: 5–7. In this study Dönike revises the traditional stress on 'Edle Einfalt und stille Größe' as the defining characteristic of (German) Neoclassicism, showing how the representation of the excessive and the violent was a major concern for Goethe and his contemporaries. Although the book takes a different perspective from the present one, it discusses many of the German authors and texts that figure prominently here.

[10] Goethe, *Italienische Reise*, 1967: vol. XI, 126, 11 November 1786: Alle Träume meiner Jugend seh'ich nun lebendig…und alles was ich in Gemälden und Zeichnungen, Kupfern und Holzschnitten, in Gyps und Kork schon lange gekannt, steht nun beisammen vor mir'. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are by the author.

[11] Goethe, *Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise für Frau von Stein* 2013: vol. XV part 1, 660: 'Da Pygmalions Elise…endlich auf ihn zukam und sagte: *ich bins!* wie anders war die Lebendige, als der gebildete Stein'.

[12] Goethe, *Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise* 1976, Letter of 21 September 1786, p. 79: 'Du weisst was die Gegenwart der Dinge zu mir spricht und ich bin den ganzen Tag in einem Gespräch mit den Dingen'.

[13] Quatremère de Quincy 2012: 97 and 99.

[14] Goethe, *Römische Elegie* v; see also *Venetianische Epigramme* 1, 1967 [1950[1]]), vol. I, 160 and 174.

[15] Goethe, 'Lieder der Mignon', *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Book III Chapter 1, 1967, vol. VII, p. 145: 'Marmorbilder steh'n und seh'n mich an.'

[16] Stuart and Revett 1762–1794: v. See also the entry in Harris and

Savage 1990: 439–50, and Pinto 2012: 146–57.

17 Gibbon 1966: 117; cf. Griener 2010: 131–49.

18 Herder 1995: 80–1: '*Ehrfurcht*, die beinah *Schrecken* wird und *Schauer*, Gefühl, als ob sie [die Statuen] *wandelten* und *lebten* […] sind die ersten Eindrücke der Kunst, zumal bei einem halbwilden, d.i. noch ganz lebendigen, nur Bewegung und Gefühl ahnenden Volke. Bei allen Wilden oder halbwilden sind daher die Statuen *belebt*, *Dämonisch*, voll Gottheit und Geistes, zumal wenn sie in Stille, in heiliger Dämmerung angebetet werden, und man ihre Stimme und Antwort erwartet.…Noch jetzt wandelt uns ein Gefühl der Art an in jedem stillen Museum oder Coliseum voll Götter und Helden: unvermerkt, wenn man unter ihnen allein ist und wie voll Andacht an sie gehet, beleben sie sich, und man ist auf ihrem Grunde in die Zeiten gerückt, da sie noch lebten und das Alles Wahrheit war, was jetzt als Mythologie und Statue darsteht.' The translation used here is from Herder 2002: 91–2.

19 Quoted by Mattos 2006: 146.

20 Meyer 1792: 119–20. Cf. Collins 2012: 113–45 for other accounts.

21 Humboldt 1907: 259–60: 'Si vous concevez, comme certainement vous le devez, de quelle consolation est un pareil souvenir dans un pays où l'on est absolument séparé de l'antiquité…' Quoted in Griener 1990: 176. On the persistence of magical and talismanic thinking in Prussia and Weimar around 1800 see Weder 2007, and Böhmer and Holm 2012.

22 Hazlitt 1930–34, vol. 10: 221.

23 Quatremère de Quincy 2012: 101.

24 For a recent rehearsal of the traditional account of the emergence of the *Style Empire* out of a combination of political patronage and an artistic ambition to return to the good taste of classical Greece and the *Grand Siècle* see Garric 2017.

25 Gell 1998: 10–28.

26 On revivals as a general feature of human cultures see for instance Feldman 2014; Gunter 2012; Schnapp 2013. The literature on Roman Imperial revivals of preceding styles is particularly well developed: see Fullerton 1990 and 2003: 92–118; Zanker 1988: 622–36.

27 Gibson 1966.

28 For criticism of traditional definitions of neoclassicism see Griener 2008; Saisselin 1979, and Whiteley 1976.

29 Watelet and Lévesque 1792: vol. I, 324.

30 Gonzalez-Palacios 1972, 2007; Panza 2017. The exhibition Piranèse

et les Français 1740–1790, held in Rome, Dijon, and Paris in 1976, with its catalogue edited by Georges Brunel (Brunel 1976), was ground-breaking in documenting his influence in France.

[31] Kantor-Kazovsky 2006; Nevola 2009; Bevilacqua 2008; Hyde Minor 2015.

[32] A particularly important recent survey of Piranesi's work as a designer rather than an engraver is De Lucci et al. 2010.

[33] Panza 2017; Kabierske 2015, 2016.

1

‘A Neo-Classical Dream and an Archaeologist’s Nightmare’

Piranesi’s Colossal Candelabra in the Louvre and Ashmolean Museum

1.1 The Emergence of the Candelabra

On a Sunday morning in 1769 Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) went to hear Mass in the village of Pantanello, near Tivoli, the site of Hadrian’s villa.[1] While waiting for the priest to arrive, he fell into conversation with the Scottish painter and excavator Gavin Hamilton, who at the time tried to drain the lake of Pantanello in the hope of recovering some more of the statues and other objects from Hadrian’s Villa.[2] Hamilton was on the point of giving up, because he could not succeed in draining the part of the lake, or rather, a snake infested marsh, clogged with tree roots and rubbish, where previous excavators had not yet been. Piranesi was able to direct him to a part of the marsh that remained untouched, and to a landowner who would allow draining through his vineyards. Hamilton was successful, and described in a letter to the British collector Charles Townley how they had to wade through the mud to come upon a vast amount of broken fragments of statues, vases, furniture, and buildings:

> It is difficult to account for the contents of this place consisting of a vast number of trees cut down and thrown into this bottom, probably out of spite, as making part of some sacred wood or grove, intermixed with statues etc. etc, all which have shared the same fate. I observed that the Egyptian Idols had suffered most,

> being broke in minute pieces, and disfigured on purpose; the Greek Sculptor in general has not so much incurred the hatred of primitive Christians and Barbarians. As to Busts and Portraits I found most of them had only suffered from the fall, when thrown into this reservoir of water and filth; what were thrown in first and that stuck in the mud, are the best preserved. Intermixed with the trees and statues, I found a vast quantity of white marble sufficient to build a lofty Pallace, a great number of columns of Alabaster much broke, as likewise of giallo antico and other precious Marble, to which I may add broken vases, basso-relievos, ornaments of all sorts, in a word a confused mixture of great part of the finest things of Hadrian's Villa.[3]

It is a perfect illustration of what Aby Warburg would call, more than a century later, the resurgence of classical forms and objects out of the night of time, of the sudden intrusion of the Graeco-Roman past in the present. Out of this chaotic mass of muddy rubble Piranesi conjured up artefacts that would fetch enormous prizes. Using these fragments he constructed monumental vases, tripods, pedestals, and not in the last place three monumental candelabra, which are the subject of this book (Figures 0.1–0.3).[4] One, more than three metres high, was destined for his own grave. The two others, slightly smaller but no less intricate, were sold for the staggering sum of 1000 gold scudi to the British collector Sir Roger Newdigate, MP for Oxford University. Newdigate left them to that institution, where they first stood in the Radcliffe Camera, and are now on display in the Ashmolean Museum.[5] To give an idea of their market value in the 1770s, people paid much less for good, reasonably intact Graeco-Roman statues excavated at the same time. For instance, a very nice version of the Discobolus or Discus Thrower had to fetch only 700 scudi.[6]

Candelabra are strange objects. In his very perceptive guide to the ruins and museums of Rome of 1854, the archaeologist Emil Braun already observed how they were calculated to create an extraordinary lustre, but were bereft of their life when exhibited in the poor conditions of the Sala dei Candelabri in the Museo Pio-Clementino:

> Usually they are considered as curiosities, in the best case as

> meaningful schemata with interesting figural ornament. But nobody is transported by their sight into a world ruled by totally different forms of perception.[7]

Hugh Honour described Piranesi's specimens as the ambition to 'realise a Neo-Classical dream and an archaeologist's nightmare'.[8]

Basically candelabra are stands, tall, composite shafts or columns, resting on a pedestal or tripod, holding a candle or carrying a disc or dish in which wood or incense could be burned.[9] Their form reflects their mythological and literary aetiology: a slave holding up a torch or incense dish. They are comparatively little studied by art historians and archaeologists, in spite of their evident importance in Graeco-Roman culture and its revivals. They go back a long time. Homer already mentions lamp holders in the Odyssey.[10] One of the earliest surviving examples, of solid gold, was made in Spain *c.* 700 BCE (Figure 2.11). In the Hellenistic kingdoms candelabra were mainly used to flank statues of the gods, or placed in temples as votive gifts. In Rome they have been located in the Isaeum and Serapaeum, in temple entrances, and in imperial tombs on the Via Appia where Piranesi may have seen them.[11] They became staggeringly luxuruous objects, made of gold, silver and bronze, and inlaid with jewels. Pliny has an interesting tale in the *Natural History* about a Roman patrician lady who pays the even more staggering sum of 50.000 sestertii for a particularly fine bronze candelabrum because it combined the excellence of the two major workshops at the time, Aegina, which specialized in the upper parts, whereas Tarentum was the place to go to for the stems.[12]

From the moment Roman authors start discussing candelabra, we find this contrast between their excessive character—in terms of craftsmanship, the cost of materials, or an opposition between actual use and market value, and because of what people did to obtain them—and the criticism by Pliny, who objects to wasting so much money on a simple lamp, and by Vitruvius, who criticizes depictions of the thin, bronze specimens on aesthetic grounds: they defy the laws of logic and physics.[13] He referred to their images in Pompeian mural painting of the Second and Third Style, but by extension also of the way the actual lamp-stands

were constructed.

In the second century CE, and particularly under the reign of Hadrian, they had a significant revival, and examples of very high quality survive from his villa in Tivoli. When these were excavated in the 1750s and 1760s they were considered so important that their proper display was one of the main reasons for the foundation of the Papal museum of antiquities, the Museo Pio-Clementino, which even today boasts a Galleria dei Candelabri.[14] Winckelmann, at the time Papal Prefect of Antiquities, opposed the sale to the British dealer Thomas Jenkins of two very fine candelabra dating from Hadrian's period that had belonged to the Barberini collection; Cardinal Albani secured them for the Museo Pio-Clementino.[15] Its founder, Pope Clement XIV, also acquired the candelabra standing in Santa Costanza and S. Agnese fuori le mura for his museum.[16]

Piranesi played a considerable role in the fabrication of these candelabra, both materially, since he put them together out of fragments submerged in the swamp of Pantanello, and in the creation of their reputation.[17] The banker and art dealer Thomas Jenkins even called him the 'Cavaliere of the Candelabra'.[18] He included designs of them in the *Diverse maniere di addornare le camini* (Figures 1.1 and 1.2) and designed two candelabra to flank the altar of S Giovanni in Laterano (Figure 1.3).

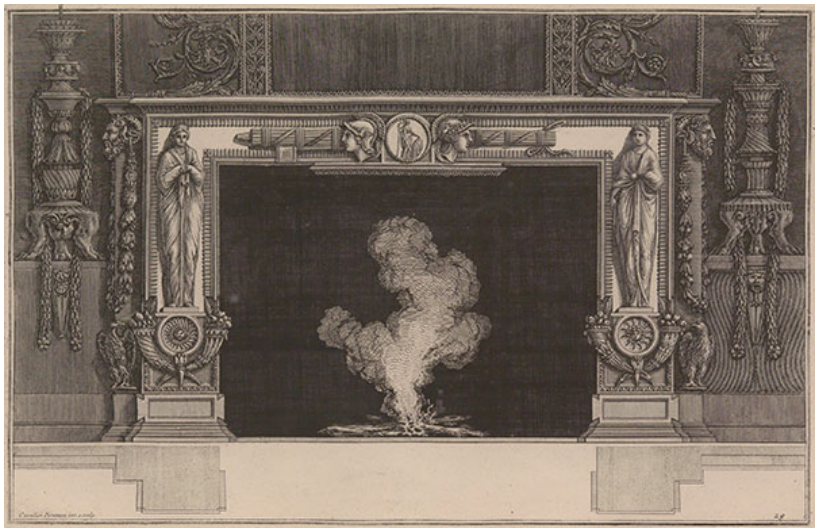

Figure 1.1 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Diverse Maniere d'Adornare I Cammini…*, Rome: Nella Stamperia di Generoso Salomoni, 1769, plate 29.

Figure 1.2 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Diverse Maniere d'Adornare I Cammini*…, Rome: Nella Stamperia di Generoso Salomoni, 1769, plate 34.

Altro progetto dell'Altar Papale della Basilica Lateranense rappresentato e
veduto dalla parte della mensa, che riguarda la Tribuna, e inventato su le Idee del Baronius, secondo il quale
è stata ornata la Basilica.

Figure 1.3 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, alternative design for papal altar with baldacchino, flanked by angels bearing candelabra, San Giovanni in Laterano, executed by a studio hand, 1760s, drawing 23 in an unbound volume of drawings for San Giovanni in Laterano held at the Avery Library at Columbia University.

His publication of eleven candelabra in one of his last published works, the collection called *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*, in circulation since 1775 and published in 1778, the year in which he died, played a major role in making these outsized lamp-stands very hot property in the circles of collectors in Rome. *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi* is a large-format collection of what we would now call Graeco-Roman material culture, showing lamps, altars, vases, lamp-stands, sarcophagi and so on, in typically Piranesian compositions, or collages, or bricolages, or pastiches even, of very different kinds of objects and fragments (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* (Rome 1778), Frontispiece.

The large majority of them share a funerary context. Somewhat unusually, Piranesi also included objects coming from ethnographic collections, such as the Museo Kircheriano and the Museo Borgiano (Figures 1.5 and 1.6).

Figure 1.5 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* (Rome 1778), Plate 7a, showing bronze and terracotta lamps, some from the Kirchner collection.

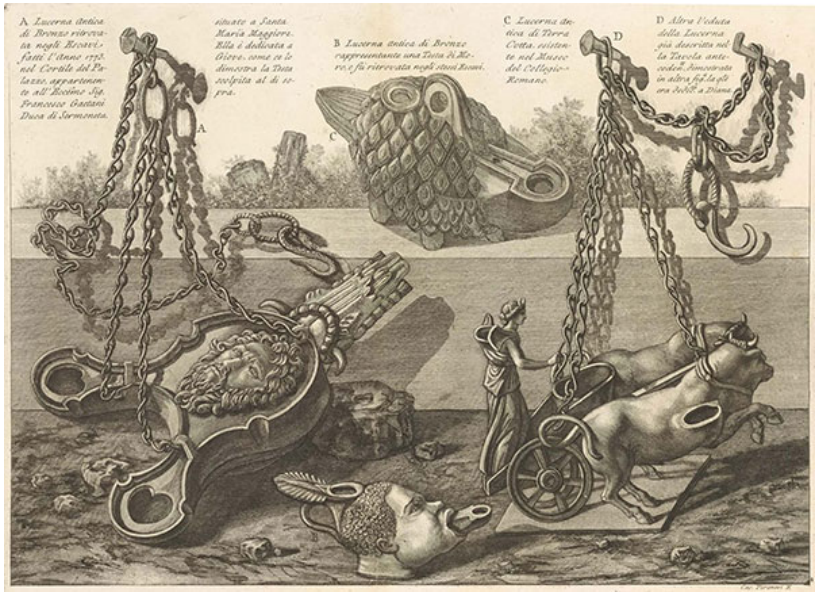

Figure 1.6 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* (Rome 1778), Plate 8, showing bronze and terracotta lamps, some from the Museo Borgiano in Velletri.

He also presented, quite prominently, etchings of the vases, tripods and candelabra he had made himself out of ancient fragments, and which he had sold, mainly to English collectors. Yet the presence of what we would now call ethnographic artefacts should make us pause and reconsider the commonly held opinion that this little-studied publication was simply a sales catalogue, made to boost the sales of the objects Piranesi had the sculptors fabricate in his studio, or what he called his Museum, in the Palazzo Tomati near the Spanish Steps in Rome.[19]

In fact, and this is also shown by the captions Piranesi wrote, this collection offers a graphic document of his attempts to materially reconstruct the funerary culture of the Roman world. In his texts he argues how, working from the fragments surviving from Pantanello, and using the classical composition principles as outlined by Vitruvius and others, chief among them symmetry, he does not restore these ancient objects, but reconstructs them entirely in the Roman manner. He is not a restorer of antiquities,

but a creator of them. To this 'Cavaliere Composito', as Jenkins called him, the principles of Roman design are just as valid in the 1770s as they were in Hadrian's period, and Piranesi is able to use them because of his unparallelled, and uniquely close knowledge of the artefacts of that period, acquired through long decades of digging, drawing, and rebuilding.

Piranesi was praised by many of his fellow artists and by collectors as uniquely capable of endowing inanimate stone with life, and even of reviving Roman antiquity. Townley called him 'The only one who was capable of bringing back to life antiquity'; Robert Adam praised his capacity, bordering on the divine, to infuse the arts of his time with the fresh blood of ancient invention and artistry. This brings us to yet another aspect of the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*: Piranesi's consistent effort to endow his creations with the appearance of life; to animate them. When we compare the images he made of the Cuthbert Vase with the object itself (Figures 1.7 a and b); or his two etchings of one of the Ashmolean candelabra with the lamp-stands themselves, it becomes clear that he uses the pictorial strategy of a view *di sotto in su*, usually reserved for the portraiture of humans. He also suggests a dynamics of potential movement by his rendition of handles, or the way light suggests animation. The images of the Ashmolean candelabrum suggest a materiality, a fulness of texture that recalls skin, and is very unlike the brittle marble surface of the object itself.

Figure 1.7a Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Cuthbert Vase*, from *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*…plate 37.

Figure 1.7b Roman vase, marble, originally in the Courtyard of S Maria in Trastevere, now in the courtyard of the Museo Nazionale Romano.

But to return to the candelabra Piranesi made. He published eleven candelabra in the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*: these include the pair now in the Ashmolean Museum, and the one in the Louvre.[20] The two candelabra that came from the Barberini collection date from Hadrian's period and were excavated at Tivoli in the 1640s for the Barberini. The ones created by Piranesi out of antique fragments all follow the same basic scheme: a pedestal consisting of three animal legs carrying a triangular block surrounding a shaft decorated either with flutings or with vegetal ornament; the block carries a series of superimposed animal heads, balusters, animals, and elements taken mainly from the Corinthian order, to end in a vase that

would carry the light (Figure 1.8).

Figure 1.8 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* plate 26, showing perspectival view of one of the Ashmolean

In the pair now in the Ashmolean, lions' or sphinxes' claws grow into acanthus leaves; in the one now in the Louvre, into a lion's head biting into the lower leg. These legs support a triangular pedestal displaying mythological figures in relief and animals on the corners; sometimes griffins, enclosing tragic and comic fauns and masks or medusa heads, or the birds living on the lake of Stymphalos which were killed by Hercules (Figure 1.9). According to the description by Ennio Quirino Visconti, the first Keeper of Antiquities at the Musée Napoléon in the Louvre, these birds are usually depicted as ostrichs, but here Piranesi concocted a new breed consisting of waterbirds with female faces, that sport enormous claws and have dragons' tails.[21]

Figure 1.9 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Louvre candelabrum, pedestal.

The two candelabra now in the Ashmolean both consist of tall, composite shafts or columns. They rest on a pedestal, and carry a disc or dish in which wood or incense could be burned, although no traces of such use survive. Lion's claws grow into acanthus leaves. These feline, feral legs support a pedestal derived from

Roman altars, which in the elephant candelabrum has reliefs showing the instruments of sacrifice (Figure 1.10). The transition between the pedestal and the shaft is articulated by animal heads —elephants on the left, rams' heads on the right.

Figure 1.10 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Ashmolean candelabrum with elephants, pedestal showing instruments of sacrifice.

The right-hand Oxford candelabrum is the most elaborate, sporting a shaft surrounded by birds that are hybrids between cranes and pelicans alternating with grotesque floral vegetation.[22] The shaft supports the statue of a faun. This is one of Piranesi's favourite aetiological strategies, showing in the ornament the origin of the object it decorates. Here he alludes to the passages in Homer, Plutarch, Pliny, or Petronius on slaves acting as living torch-bearers.[23] The faun carries the crowning disc on which wood or incense could be burned. The one on the left looks slightly simpler. Lion claws carry the base of an altar decorated with paraphernalia of sacrifice; next comes a transitional element adorned with very pensive elephants' heads

(Figure 1.11).

Figure 1.11 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Oxford candelabrum with elephants, detail showing elephant heads.

These carry a second altar, this time a tripod with reliefs of Olympian gods, which hides the shaft from sight. It emerges

however in the upper part of the candelabrum to be transformed in a succession of Corinthian upright and overturned vases that end here as well in a dish that could carry the actual light.

When we zoom in on the one on the right, we can distinguish a very rich, and subtly carved relief of masks on the part carried by the lion's claws, flanked at the corners by winged eagles with very prominent beaks (Figure 1.12). This supports a combination of floral elements and dolphins that in turn carry rams' heads. Here the fantastic confection does not stop: the next part is formed by a trio of pelicans or cranes, with claws that firmly grasp their support and attentive beaks, resting against a Corinthian floral motif that suggests a grinning grotesque face (Figure 1.13). Next comes the faun supporting the disc that would carry light.

Figure 1.12 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Oxford candelabrum with cranes, detail of masks on pedestal.

Figure 1.13 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Oxford candelabrum with cranes, detail of cranes.

The elephant candelabrum looks possibly less extravagant at first sight. Here the shaft is a simple fluted column, surrounded by three lions biting into their own claws. They carry a succession of layers that sometimes recall the basis of an altar. At other times they look like bands of architectural mouldings:

palmettes for instance, or cymae rectae or reversae. Next comes yet another sacrificial element, this time a tripod such as would be used as the basis of Roman candelabra, with reliefs of three gods. This is crowned by three rams' heads that form the transition to the final part, again a variation and elaboration of architectural mouldings such as the egg list, combined with Corinthian acanthus leaves that seem to reach, in their upward growth, into the culminating disc.

In the Louvre candelabrum the feline claws support a triangular layer decorated with Birds of Stymphalos, ferocious beasts living on Lake Stymphalos, killed by Hercules. The articulation between the legs and this zone is provided by three superposed layers of ornament derived from the classical Orders, such as egg and dart lists, that show clear evidence of restoration and eighteenth-century additions. The transition between the pedestal and the shaft is here articulated by three rams' heads that carry a column consisting of an almost postmodern bricolage of elements taken from the pedestals of columns, tragic masks, and fauns harvesting fruit, another row of *modenature* taken from the Corinthian and composite order, a bit of twisted Solomonic column, culminating in a series of leaves, lion's heads, and acanthus leaves that support the large basin that could carry burning wood or candles (Figure 1.14).

Figure 1.14 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Louvre candelabrum, detail of shaft.

Preliminary drawings and sketches survive, that are now kept in the British Museum (Figure 1.15), the Avery Library, and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. There is also a recently discovered folio-sized sketch in red chalk in Karlsruhe by Piranesi himself or his workshop (Figure 1.16).[24] They show the speed,

fire and drive to animate inanimate objects that characterize much of Piranesi's ornamental work, and which was noted so often by his contemporaries.

Figure 1.15 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, design for an ornate candelabrum, pen, brown ink and chalk on paper, 1772–77, 247 × 89 mm, London: British Museum.

Figure 1.16 Giovanni Battista Piranesi or his workshop, design for one of the Newdigate Candelabra now in Oxford, second half eighteenth century, black and red chalk with pen and brown ink on paper, 777 × 562 mm, Karlsruhe: Staatliche Kunsthalle.

Legs in the shape of animal claws are a prominent feature of many objects included in the *Vasi*, as in this tripod made from a sarcophagus (Figure 1.17). In fact the animation of chair and table legs, and the almost obsessive use of wild, feral animal legs for them, is one of the most distinctive features of late eighteenth-century neoclassical and Empire furniture. The art and literature historian Mario Praz for instance observed in his *On Neo-Classicism* that if he would have to start counting all the animal and animated legs in his furniture, there would be no end to trying to keep track of this zoo.[25] Possibly the most suggestive account is the one by Proust's Duchesse de Guermantes, in her account of a visit to the Iéna, the descendants of one of Napoleon's generals:

Al Signor Tommaso Barrett Cavaliere Inglese
amatore e seguace delle belle arti
In atto d' Ossequio il Cavalier Gio Batta Piranesi D.D.D.
Altare antico di marmo ritrovato fra le macerie della Villa Adriana nel sito detto Pantanello. La sua gran Conca
è ovata, e sostenuta da due Ippogriffi elegantemente lavorati, e corrispondenti al Secolo felice delle arti al tempo
d' Adriano. Questo Monumento si vede nella raccolta delle antichità del Cavalier Piranesi. Il basamento che regge
quest'ara è stato disegnato da un Monumento antico che si vede nella facciata del Palazzo Barberini verso il Giardino.

Figure 1.17 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, candelabri e cippi…* plate 66, View of a tripod on a pedestal made from a sarcophagus.

I must confess that the Empire style has always had a fascination for me. But at the Iéna's it is really like a hallucination. That sort of—what shall I call it—backwash from the Egyptian Expedition, and then too, the returning tide into our own times from Antiquity, all these things invading our houses, the Sphinxes couching at the

> feet of our armchairs, the serpents coiled around candelabra, a huge Muse holding out a little torch for you to play card games under, or who has quietly perched on to the mantelpiece and is leaning against your clock; and then all the Pompeiian lamps, the little boat-shaped beds looking as if they had been found floating on the Nile so that you expect to see Moses climb out of them, the Roman chariots galloping alongside the bedside tables….[26]

1.2 The Lives of Piranesi's Candelabra

Next to their strange, uncanny, excessive features, to which I will return in Chapter 4, these candelabra also led very interesting lives. Piranesi claimed that he had found the one now in the Louvre in the collection of the Palazzo Salviati alla Lungara. Unfortunately, no inventory of the collection as it was in the late eighteenth century survives, so we cannot assess this claim.[27] He destined it for his own grave, originally meant to be in Santa Maria degli Angeli.[28] It is shown in the background of the posthumous portrait by Pietro Labruzzi, now in the Palazzo Braschi in Rome. Here we meet another aspect of its excessive character. Piranesi had designed quite a number of candelabra, including a pair for his redecoration scheme for San Giovanni in Laterano, but projecting to have such an enormous candelabrum, usually employed to flank the altar, the most sacred part of a church, for one's own grave, and with such a pagan iconography as well, was quite unheard-of. As he himself explains in the text accompanying its image in the *Vasi, Candelabri*, the four faun's heads or theatrical masks, refer to the four kinds of poetry, but also to the four stages of human life; the fauns taking down pine cones, the last fruit of the season, symbolize the end of life.

Piranesi was actually first buried in the much less grandiose parish church of Sant' Andrea delle Fratte. Subsequently his body was reburied in Santa Maria del Priorato, his only actual building, but the candelabrum was replaced there by a lifesize statue of the artist by Giuseppe Angelini after 1786. In the 1790s it re-entered the Museo Piranesi on the Via Tomati, where Cardinal Braschi acquired it.[29] The French confiscated the

candelabrum and had it transported to Paris, where it was on display from 1810.[30] Piranesi's son Francesco, who had established himself in Paris with his father's etching plates, reclaimed the candelabrum, and was compensated by Louis XVIII in 1815.[31] In the Louvre its display is first attested in 1810, in what was then called the Musée des Antiques, at the time the largest collection of classical antiquities ever, and located in the former apartments of Anne of Austria in the Cour Carrée.[32] There it took pride of place next to the *Diane Chasseresse*, the Wounded Amazon and other major Classical statues transported to Paris as a result of the Treaty of Tolentino. Following Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo the classical sculpture collection was depleted, but the Candelabrum remained in the Louvre. In 1817 Ennio Quirino Visconti, the former Prefect of Antiquities at the Vatican, who became the first Keeper of Antiquities at the Louvre under Napoleon, initiated a reorganization of the museum, where he devised a sequence of rooms all devoted to one major work, and pioneered a reappraisal of Hadrianic and late Imperial art.[33] In the new situation the Salle de Diane briefly became the Salle du Candélabre, as is documented by an image from the *Musée de sculpture antique et moderne* of 1841 by F. de Clarac, at the time its Director.[34]

In the 1817 catalogue Visconti praised the Candelabrum as 'One of the greatest [candelabra] that survive from Antiquity, and one of the most remarkable, both for the singularity of its shape and for the excellence and variety of the sculptures that adorn it.'[35] But in subsequent editions of the catalogue, starting with the edition revised by Clarac of 1830, its authenticity is increasingly questioned. It was moved to the Salle du Candélabre, in the gallery that connects the medieval part of the Louvre to the wing perpendicular to the Seine. Here it was surrounded by bas-reliefs, tripods, and animal statues. Clarac now suggested that it is a restoration, and possibly even a fake:

> This magnificent candelabrum *would be* the greatest one surviving from antiquity…if it had always existed in this way; but it has been largely made out of different fragments of antique altars, candelabra and tripods, by J. B. Piranesi. [italics added].[36]

As a result of this gradual shift in appreciation the candelabrum began to travel around the Louvre. It was first moved, probably in the 1850s, to the Salle des Caryatides. In the 1869 Wilhelm Fröhner, the successor to Visconti and Clarac, who oversaw the restructuring of the Department of Antiquities that took place during the Second Empire, gave a very detailed, and quite damning assessment of its authenticity, carefully listing authentic parts, restorations, and eighteenth-century additions:

> An arbitrary, and extremely bizarre assemblage of antique fragments, mixed with modern pieces. Three bases, piled on top of each other make up its pedestal. On the triangular plinth three claws are placed, covered with the remains of panther heads. They support a base…whose corners are occupied by three of these fantasy beings which the ancients used to place on certain monuments to protect them from violation.…
>
> Third base: certainly modern, except for the small support covered in acanthus leaves, and a part of the rams' heads which the restorer has decorated with flowers.…The shaft (*scapus*) of the candelabrum. The first part, which takes the form of a basket, is modern, and the restorer has dressed it with pine branches. The bacchic attributes which he has attached to it (syrinx, pedum, pair of cymbals) are not of the best sort; only the small theatre mask, inserted in the middle, is ancient.'[37]

When one takes a close look at the candelabrum the cracks, joints, and differences in carving are very clear to see, for instance in the mouldings on the pedestal (see Figure 1.18).

Figure 1.18 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Candelabrum in the Louvre, close-up of mouldings on pedestal.

He also noted that Piranesi, when producing series of elements, such as the three rams' heads or feline claws, would consistently use one Roman specimen, and have it copied twice to make up a complete triad. Possibly as a result of this evaluation it was moved to a position outside the Salle des Caryatides. In the early years of this century it was restored and put into storage during the preparations for the new display of the Département des Objets d'Art, to become a part of the recently opened Salle Piranèse, devoted to the eighteenth-century culture of collecting, next to some much smaller Roman specimens from the periods of Augustus and Hadrian. Its trajectory in the Louvre thus documents the radical change in its appreciation, from a masterpiece of antique sculpture to a document in the history of collecting, now ascribed to Piranesi, but of doubtful authenticity. In the most recent sculpture catalogue of the Louvre it is now listed under the rubric of restored ancient sculpture, 'complétées ou transformées—copies d'antiques'.[38]

The two candelabra bought by the British collector and politician Sir Roger Newdigate in Rome in 1775 and transported to Oxford under supervision by Thomas Jenkins, have a different biography, which tells us more about the role of these objects in art history. Piranesi claimed they had been excavated 'tale quale' in 1769 in the Villa Hadriana. He was quite emphatic about their provenance and authenticity in the caption to their etching in the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi*. Of the pelican candelabrum he also claimed it was

> A singular antique piece…It was found among the other antiquities in the dig made in 1769 on the site called Pantanello, two miles from Tivoli, owned by the family of the Lolli, and was of old called the site of a lake that belonged to the delights of the Villa Hadriana.[39]

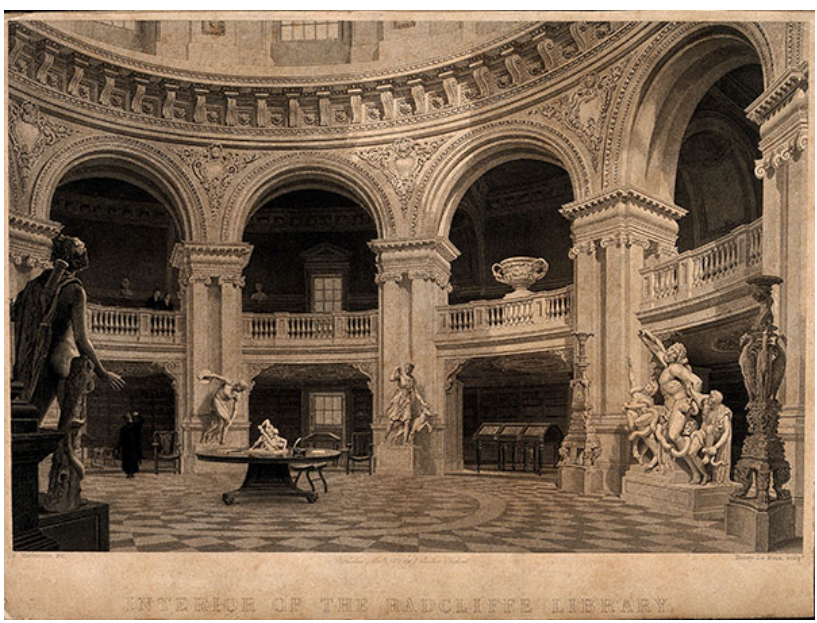

Figure 1.19 Interior of the Radcliffe Camera, Oxford, with the Newdigate Candelabra flanking a cast of the Laocoon, from *Memorials of Oxford*, *c.* 1835.

Collectors believed these claims. He sold the two candelabra to Newdigate in 1775 for 1000 gold scudi, with the antiques dealer Jenkins acting as intermediary. Once they had arrived in England and were put on display in 1777 in the Radcliffe Library, they were hailed as original pieces of incomparable quality, 'being indeed a perfect school in themselves, of Sculpture and Architecture' as George Horne put it in a letter to Newdigate in 1777.[40] They had, like Piranesi's tripods, quite a progeny, for instance in the shape of smaller-scaled gilt transformations. Yet less than thirty years later, in the 1810s, they were dismissed by the painter James Barry, as total fakes and utter trash. Sketching a short development of Roman architecture, he sees the period of Hadrian as one of total decadence, whose riot of ornament allowed 'people like Piranesi to fabricate candelabra out of the ruins at Tivoli, and other examples of this kind of trash'.[41] The Radcliffe Library initially refused them in 1801, but eventually gave them a very conspicuous position in the central space next to casts of the Laocoon, the *Diane Chasseresse* and the Apollo Belvedere.[42] The Ashmolean Museum took them over in 1894, where they were initially placed in the Randolph Gallery, moved in 1983 to the eastern end of the gallery, and moved to the entrance of the Ruskin lecture hall in 1991. According to a recent examination, cleaning and restoration, very few parts are actually Roman, and many parts have been made to look older in the eighteenth century, but opinion remains divided, with some experts believing considerable parts date from Hadrian's era.[43] They are now at the end of the gallery displaying the Arundel marbles.[44] That is, from a major document of the ongoing material presence of Roman art and a showpiece of classical sculpture, they too, like their fellow candelabrum in the Louvre, have become documents in the history of archaeology and collecting.

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[1] On Piranesi's work in Tivoli see Lavagne 1985: 259–81 and 2002: 55–63.

[2] On Hamilton see Cassidy 2010.

[3] Hamilton 1901: 309.

[4] According to Wilton-Ely 2007: 40–6, Piranesi produced 11 candelabra, including 2 for Newdigate, 1 for himself, 1 featuring the heads of a bull and two lions, dedicated to Abbondio Rezzonico; 2 eventually sold by his son Francesco to King Gustav III; 1 (now in the Lady Lever Gallery in Port Sunlight) that was on display in the sculpture galleries of Thomas Hope, first at Duchess Street, later at Deepdene, Surrey (cf. Watkin 1968: fig. 7, plate 65).

[5] Penny 1992, vol. III: 108–16.

[6] Bignamini and Hornsby 2010: 290.

[7] Braun 1854: 472: 'Man betrachtet sie dann gewöhnlich als Merkwürdigkeiten, im besten Falle als sinnvolle Schemata mit interessantem bildlichen Beiwerk. Niemand aber sieht sich durch ihren Anblick in eine Welt versetzt, in der ganz andere Anschauungsformen gelten.' On the Barberini candelabra see pp. 346–50, 485–6 (S. Costanza) and 491 (S. Agnese). See also p. 476 for his formal analysis of the Otricoli Candelabra in the Vatican: 'Die marmornen Prachtleuchter…zeichnen sich nicht nur durch schöne und auf die Fernwirkung trefflich berechnete Verhältnisse, sondern auch durch ein äußerst sinnreiches Gedankenspiel aus, welches sich der Formen der organischen Natur in buntem Wechsel, nie aber mit blinder Willkür bedient. Eine dreiseitige, nach oben sich verjüngende Ara, welche auf arabeskenartig angefügten Löwentatzen ruht, pflegt die architektonische Grundlage zu bilden, auf welcher dann der Schaft kühn emporsteigt. Seine Bildung wird als die Schöpfung des Pflanzentriebes betrachtet, dessen weise bemessene Thätigkeit sich durch die verschiedensartigsten Blätter- und Stengelformationen der Reihe nach kundgiebt, und das lichthungrige Emporstreben, welches sich in der Wachsknoten immer aufs Neue concentrirt und von diesen aus abermals zu treiben beginnt, bis sich das Ganze mit einer jener Schalen krönt, die es wie eine Sonnenblume zum Abschluss bringen, findet darin einen sinnvollen Ausdruck.'

See also his description of the set of candelabra from S. Agnese, p. 491: 'Akanthusdocken sind so über einander auf gethürmt, dass die untere eine umgestürzten Fruchtkorbe ähnelt, und den drei übrigen aufsteigenden zur Grundlage dient. Zwischen diesen Balaustren sind doppelte Schalen angebracht, die einander bald den Rand, bald den Boden zukehren. Auf dem Gipfel dieser Säule steht eine mit Pfeifen verzierte kraterförmige Vase. Trotz der Einfachheit der angewandten ornamentalen Mittel ist eine recht reiche Wirkung erzielt werden, wobei noch der nicht unerhebliche Vortheil gewonnen ist, dass sich ein solcher Marmorleuchter mit Leichtigkeit auseinandernehmen und wieder zusammensetzen [und] von der Stelle bewegen lässt.…der Umstand beweisen scheint, dass sie mit einem dritten verbunden waren, welcher in S. Agnese

zurückgeblieben ist. Dort kann man besser als hier die schöne Wirkung beurtheilen lernen, welche ähnliche Denkmäler in den weiten Räumen gemacht haben müssen, für die sie ursprünglich bestimmt gewesen sind. Aller Wahrscheinlichkeit zufolge standen sie in den Säulenzwischenräumen eines Prachtgebäudes aufgereiht, dem auch die beiden aus S. Costanza entnommen worden sein werden. In einem solchen Wechsel mit verwandten architektonischen Gliedrungen mögen sie einen magischen Effekt gemacht haben.'

8 Honour 1980: p. 56.

9 Strictly speaking there is a difference between *thymiateria* and candelabra. The former are incense burners, sometimes with a perforated lid and a short shaft, often made of bronze, and generally taking the shape of three animal feet supporting a shaft that carried a disc in which incense was burned. They originated from Phoenicia and became widespread across the Mediterranean in the seventh and sixth century BC. In Greece they were used in domestic, festive, and funeral settings. Candelabra were used originally as candle holders, and were made of bronze, silver, or marble. They were used in temples, and subsequently also in domestic interiors. In Antiquity the distinction already became blurred. Possibly, as Ruth Bielfeldt suggested in an oral communication, this began to happen in the second century CE, as there are no surviving depictions of marble candelabra in Pompei. As far as I can see Piranesi showed no awareness of the difference between the two object types. See also the entries on thymiateria and candelabra in Cancik et al. 2008.

10 *Odyssey* VII.100–3.

11 Cain 1985: 5–21. The candelabra from Hadrian's Villa are most fully described in Gusman 1904: chapter 7. The fullest account of their history and use in antiquity is that of Visconti 1819, vol. IV: 31–43 and 305–6. See also his description of the candelabra in the collection of Richard Worsley in Worsley and Visconti 1794.

12 Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, XXXIV.6.

13 The main testimonia are Vitruvius, *De architectura libri X*, VII.5.3, Cicero, *In Verrem* IV. 60–71; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistes* I.iv.2. On the afterlife of Vitruvius' condemnation see Gombrich 1968.

14 On the early history of the Museo Pio-Clementino see Collins 2012, in particular his discussion on pp. 118–19 of the medal struck in 1771 to commemorate the founding of the museum, which shows the two Barberini candelabra which were Clement XIV's first acquisition. Their display was a sign of the Pope's wish 'that the precious relics of all types of antiquities might remain whenever possible in this our city and thereby enhance its dignity'. See also Pietrangeli 1985: 44. See also Cassidy 1990: 105; Collins 2010, and 2008/9.

15 Penny 1992, vol. I: 109. See also Cassidy 1990 and Coltman

2009: 124–7. On the excavation and subsequent history of the Barberini candelabra see most recently De Franceschini 2017: 144–63.

16 See Penny 1992, vol. I: 108–16.

17 On Jenkins's activities as an art dealer see Ashby 1913 and Ford 1974. See also the statements by contemporaries quoted in Scott 1985: 347, note 18, from Blundell 1803: 174. He wrote that 'This ancient vase […] was bought in 1777, of Piranese, senior, a noted artist whose house was then loaded with all kinds of antique marbles and curiosities. His fertile imagination led him to the business of restoring ancient marbles; and he often from small fragments, formed very elegant things: witness the two candelabra in the Radcliffe Library in Oxford which […] are a curious specimen of Piranese's genius.'

18 Penny 1992, vol. III: 108.

19 The most recent, and very detailed, study of the Museo, its collection and its dispersal, although not always reliable, is Panza 2017.

20 Piranesi 1778. The plates first appeared separately, and were later published jointly in various combinations. The best known edition is the one in two volumes, with 110 plates and the title pages. This one was edited probably by his son Francesco, and not before 1779. Because few copies are identical I refer to the Ficacci nrs: 755, 756, 757, 780, 781, 836, 837, 840, 843, 847, and 848 in Ficacci 2011.

21 Visconti 1819: 305–6.

22 In his entry on the Ashmolean candelabra, Nicholas Penny identifies the birds as cranes, but there is some discussion about this. Like so many of Piranesi's animals, they do not adhere entirely or consistently to one species. See Penny 1992, vol. I: 108.

23 On the candelabrum as a body double see Bielfeldt 2018.

24 Georg Kabierske 2015.

25 Praz 1969: 153–87.

26 Proust 1988, vol. II.ii: 809: 'J'avoue que le style Empire m'a toujours impressionnée. Mais, chez les Iéna, là, c'est vraiment comme une hallucination. Cette espèce, comment vous dire, de […] reflux de l'expédition d'Egypte, et puis aussi de remontée jusqu'à nous de l'Antiquité, tout cela qui envahit nos maisons, les Sphinx qui viennent se mettre aux pieds des fauteuils, les serpents qui s'en roulent aux candélabres, une Muse énorme qui vous tend un petit flambeau pour jouer à la bouillotte ou qui est tranquillement montée sur votre cheminée et s'accoude à votre pendule, et puis toutes les lampes pompéiennes, les petits lits en bateau qui ont l'air d'avoir été trouvés sur le Nil et d'où on s'attend à voir sortir Moïse, ces quadriges antiques qui galopent le long des tables de nuit.' The English translation is from Proust 2004: 517.

[27] Sapelli 1991: 159–63. See also Matz and Duhn 1881.

[28] Wilton-Ely 2007 has identified a sketch by Piranesi, from 1778, now in the Baltimore Museum of Art, for an alternative tomb design, conceived after the artist had realized he would not be buried in Santa Maria degli Angeli.

[29] Papini 2000: 48; Wilton-Ely 2007: 44–5, who also quotes the comments of Prince Stanislas Poniatowski, one of the few surviving accounts of the candelabrum while in Santa Maria del Priorato: 'Close to here, also on the Aventine, is the priory, disfigured by Piranesi's ugly church, in which there is a candelabrum, made up of beautiful pieces assembled quite tastelessly and not even set up on the perpendicular.'

[30] Martinez 2004: no. 1174.

[31] See Caira Lumetti 1990: 213–37 and 234. See also, mainly on the fate of Piranesi's etchings plates, Hyde Minor and Pinto (2016).

[32] On the origins of the Galerie des Antiques see Gallo 1999: 182–8.

[33] Cf. Pietrangeli 1953: 46 and 177, and the entry on Visconti in De Grummond 2015, vol. II: 1173–6. On the Galerie des Antiques see Gallo 2009: 111–23, and Bresc-Bautier 2016, vol. III: 85.

[34] De Clarac 1841: plate 141.

[35] Visconti 1817: 67 no 172: 'un des plus grands [candélabres] qui nous restent de l'antiquité, et un des plus remarquables, tant par la singularité de sa forme que par l'excellence et la variété des sculptures qui en font l'ornement.'

[36] De Clarac 1848: 89–90: 'Ce magnifique candélabre *serait* le plus grand qui nous reste de l'antiquité…s'il avait toujours existé ainsi; mais il a été formé de différens fragmens d'autels, de candélabres et de trépieds antiques en grande partie, par J.B. Piranesi ….[italics added]

[37] Fröhner 1869: 303, no. 312: 'Assemblage arbitraire et on ne peut plus bizarre de fragments antiques, mêlés de pièces modernes. Trois bases entassés l'un sur l'autre en forment le piédestal. Sur la plinthe triangulaire sont posées trois griffes, couvertes de dépouilles de têtes de panthère. Elles supportent une base…dont les coins sont occupés par trois de ces êtres fantastiques que les anciens avaient l'habitude de mettre sur certains monuments pour en empêcher la violation ….Troisième base: absolument moderne, sauf le petit support, revêtu de feuilles d'acanthe, et une partie des têtes de bélier que le restaurateur a ornée de fleurs ….Le fût (*scapus*) du candélabre. Le premier membre, qui affecte la forme d'une corbeille, est moderne, et le restaurateur l'a revêtu de branches de pin. Les attributs bachiques qu'il y a suspendus (syrinx, pedum, paire de cymbales) ne sont pas de meilleur aloi; seul, le petit masque de théâtre, enchâssé dans le milieu, est antique.

La scène principale représente un Satyre qui…grimpe sur un arbre pour

enrecueillir les fruits. Silène…est appuyé contre un masque et relève la tête vers son compagnon…. A leurs pieds…quatre masques colossaux d'une beauté achevée.

La partie supérieure du candélabre se compose d'un balustre et d'un nouveau support orné de trois têtes de lion, de guirlandes et d'instruments de sacrifice …. Les feuilles d'acanthe sur lesquelles se dresse la coupe, le haut de la tige et le plateau sont modernes.

[*parties restaurées:* Quelques morceaux des griffes de lion; le balustre et une partie considérable de la plinthe qu'il supporte; plusieurs morceaux de la base aux monstres et du chapiteau corinthien; deux têtes de bélier et la moitié du troisième; la base ronde enrichie d'entrelacs, de frise de feuillage etc.—Les pins (sauf un morceau de bas d'un tronc d'arbre). Le nez des deux masques de Satyres-femelles; la partie gauche du masque de Silène; le nez et l'occiput du Satyre barbu. Les bras, les jambes, la cuisse droite et la moitié de la cuisse gauche du Satyre vendangeur. Le bras droit, à partir du milieu du biceps, les pieds et le genou gauche du Silène, avec le devant de la cuisse et de la jambe. Les attributs bachiques (sauf le masque comique).—Quelques morceaux du balustre et tout ce qui se trouve au-dessus des têtes du lion.]

38 Bresc-Bautier 2006: 394.

39 Piranesi 1778: caption to plate 26: '[P]ezzo singolare di antiquità . …Fu ritrovato fra le alter antichità nello scavo fatto l'anno 1769 nel sito ditto Pantanello due miglia lontano da Tivoli posseduto della famiglia dei Signori Lolli, ed era anticamente detto sito un lago appartenente alle delizie della Villa Adriana.'

40 Quoted in McCarthy 1972: 469.

41 Barry 1809, vol. I, pp. 125–6: '…in so fantastic a manner with so little of the true forms remaining, that they serve indifferently for all kinds of things, and are with ease converted into candelabra, chimney pieces, and what now Examples of this kind of trash may be seen in abundance in the collection of Piranesi'; quoted in Lo Bianco p. 345: visited Piranesi's studio in the 1770s. See also Blundell 1803: 174, quoted above in note 17.

42 Ovenell 1986: 144 and 184–5; Penny 1992, vol. I: 108.

43 Cliveden Restoration Workshop, The Ashmolean Treatment Report March 2014. Piranesi Candelabra. I am much indebted to the Ashmolean for consulting this document, as well as to Torsten Oblen and Salvatore Settis for their comments during a visit to the candelabra in 2017.

44 In Penny 1992, vol. I: 112 Nicholas Penny argues that for the candelabrum with the faun, 'The parts which are probably ancient, even if patched up and sometimes worked over, are […] the kneeling faun, the stage decorated with screwed dolphins with a scallop between them, the foliate lion's feet, and […] the part of the base with expressive masks in low relief flanked by eagles.' Of its companion with elephants, he notes that 'the three lion's legs with their pelts and heads on their knees and the stage decorated with squat sphinxes with vegetal tails come into this category.' The

restoration, cleaning and material analysis done by the Ashmolean in 2013 has not significantly altered this view, but did identify some sixteenth-century elements integrated by Piranesi into the fabric of the candelabra. Penny also argues the sculptors working on the candelabra were Lorenzo Cardelli, who had also worked on the candelabra moved in 1772 from S. Agnese fuori le mure to the Museo Pio-Clementino, and Francesco Antonio Franzoni, who specialized in animal sculpture, and restored many of the sculptures in the Sala degli Animali in the Vatican. See Amelung and Lippold 1956: 544; Amelung1908, vol. II.ii: no. 122; Carloni 1991: 155–255; González-Palacios 1994: 107–28.

2

Candelabra in Antiquity, their Rediscovery, and Reception

Before Piranesi began to make marble candelabra in the 1770s, he could have seen them from his earliest childhood in Venice, where sixteenth and seventeenth-century specimens had prominent positions in the Basilica of San Marco and the churches of San Giorgio and Santa Maria della Salute (Figures 2.1–2.2a and b). On his travels from Venice to Rome he may very well have seen some of the most famous Renaissance candelabra, the one by Andrea Briosco called Riccio in Padua, and those in the Medici Chapel attributed to Michelangelo or his workshop (Figures 2.3 and 2.4a and b). Piranesi drew them, for instance in his etching of the interior of Santa Costanza published in the *Opere Varie*, which shows two candelabra from the first or second century CE (Figure 2.5). In his submission for the competition for the interior of San Giovanni in Laterano of 1764–1767 he also included one very close to Bernini's angels, now in S. Andrea delle Fratte in Rome, the other a composition that combines young angels cavorting around Rococo candlesticks supported by superimposed vases (Figure 1.3).[1]

Figure 2.1 Plaster cast by Raphael Pinti (dates unknown), Venice *c.* 1869, after Maffeo Olivieri (1484–1543), candelabrum for San Marco, Venice, London: V&A.

Figure 2.2a and b Andrea di Alessandro Bresciano (*c*. 1530–*c*. 1569), active *c*. 1550, bronze candelabra, Venice: Santa Maria della Salute.

Figure 2.3 Andrea Briosco, called Riccio (1470–1532), bronze candelabrum, h. 392 cm, 1507–16, Padua: Basilica of Saint Anthony.

Figure 2.4a Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564) and studio, altar with candelabra attributed to Michelangelo, New Sacristy: Medici Chapel, interior, 1519–34.

Figure 2.4b Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), design for a candelabrum, 1520–30, black chalk, brush and brown wash, incised lines, and compass points on cream laid paper, 43.4 × 25.4 cm, New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum.

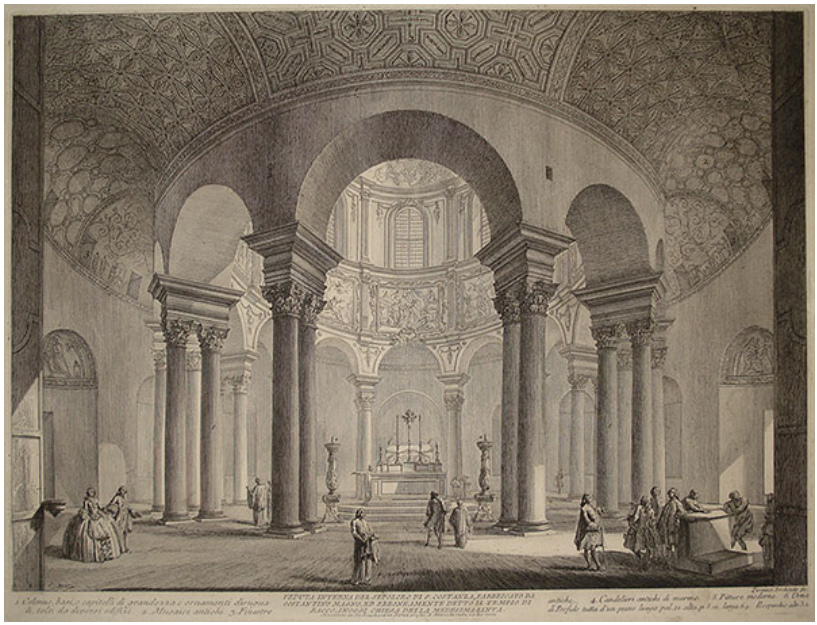

Figure 2.5 Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), *Veduta interiore del Sepolcro di Santa Costanza*, from *Opere Varie di Architettura*, Rome 1756, 395 × 545 mm.

At least two groups of Roman candelabra whose authenticity was not in doubt in the eighteenth century were very familiar to him: the Barberini candelabra, named after its second owner, Cardinal Barberini, who obtained them from their excavator Bulgarini in the 1630s (Figures 2.6 and 2.7). In 1766 they came into the hands of the restorer Cavaceppi, who was much involved with Piranesi's studio. After heavy restoration Jenkins tried to sell them to an English collector, but this was prevented by Winckelmann and Cardinal Albani. Instead they were bought by Pope Clement XIV in 1770, among the first acquisitions of what would become the Museo Pio-Clementino.[2] The other group consists of six candelabra which had been standing in Sant' Agnese fuori le mura, and Santa Costanza on the Via Nomentana (Figures 2.8 and 2.9). Clement XIV had them transported to the Museo Pio-Clementino in 1772, where they were restored by Lorenzo Cardelli. One of them was returned to S. Agnese, but the

others remained, and are still on display in the Galleria dei Candelabri (Figure 2.10). Because of the prominent use of acanthus leaves and tendrils they are often dated to the Augustan age.[3] In both groups ornament is derived from the acanthus, and they have pedestals with reliefs showing gods, but in the trio from Santa Costanza these gods are Erotes surrounded by acanthus tendrils, whereas the two Barberini reliefs have adult Olympian gods. The iconography of the trio plays on notions of love and eternal life; that of the duo has a coherent iconography of gods and their victims—Apollo and Marsyas for instance. As Emil Braun has shown, their location invites the viewer to follow their gaze from one side to the other.[4]

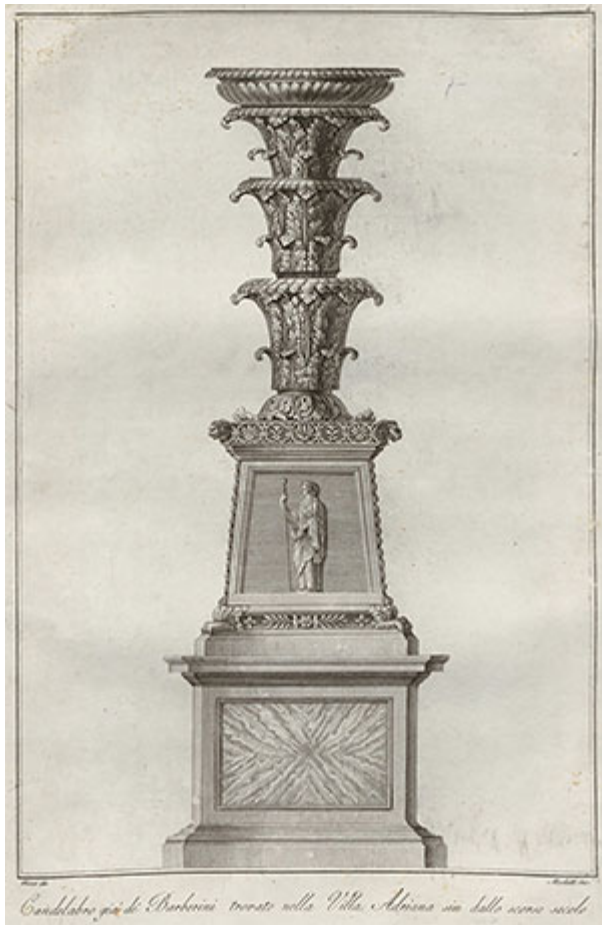

Figure 2.6 Barberini candelabrum of Zeus. Height 2.16 m, marble, second century CE, with considerable restorations by Cavaceppi, Vatican: Museo Pio-Clementino. Excavated in the sixteenth century from the Villa Hadriana, now in the Museo Pio-Clementino, Vatican, Rome. Engraving from E.Q. Visconti, *Il Museo Pio-Clementino*, Rome: n.p., 1788, vol. IV, Plate I.

Figure 2.7 Barberini candelabrum of Ares. Height 2.02 m, marble, second century CE, with considerable restorations by Cavaceppi, Vatican: Museo Pio-Clementino. Excavated in the sixteenth century from the Villa Hadriana, now in the Museo Pio-Clementino, Vatican, Rome. Engraving from E.Q. Visconti, *Il Museo Pio-Clementino*, Rome: n.p., 1788, vol. IV, Plate V.

Figure 2.8 Candelabrum a from Sant' Agnese, Rome, marble, first–second century CE, with some eighteenth-century repairs, and modern fire basins, Rome: Vatican Musea, Sala dei Candelabri. From Visconti, *Il Museo Pio-Clementino*, Rome 1807, vol. VII.

Figure 2.9 Candelabra from Santa Costanza, Rome, marble, first–second century CE, with some eighteenth-century repairs, Rome: Vatican Musea, Sala dei Candelabri. From Visconti, *Il Museo Pio-Clementino*, Rome 1807, vol. VII.

Figure 2.10 Alessandro Dori et al., Museo Pio-Clementino, 1771–1780, Sala dei Candelabri.

This brief glance at candelabra Piranesi knew, from Antiquity as well as the sixteenth or seventeenth century, shows how varied the type had become by the seventeenth century, as well as the persistence of the Roman variety; but perhaps most clearly how different Piranesi's stone candelabra are from their predecessors. So first we will have a brief look at the development of candelabra from the resurgence of Roman varieties in the 1430s, which is largely uncharted territory. Next we will look at the cultural meanings attached to Roman lamp stands. In Section 2.3 we will compare Piranesi's designs with their ancestors and models, and take a closer look at his design methods, to return in the final section of this chapter to the radical shift in appreciation and fundamental instability in the appraisal and categorization of his monumental candelabra. Despite their continuing presence in the material culture of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and their ongoing life until the present, which would make the

candelabrum the perfect object for an essay in the material reception of Antiquity, there are no recent, or comprehensive, overviews of this type of artefact. It would go far beyond the purpose of this book to provide one, but establishing some elements of its pedigree—and how it was perceived in the eighteenth century—will help to get a clearer focus on what Piranesi actually did when creating his works from Hadrianic fragments excavated at Pantanello, or from parts found in the collection of the Palazzo Salviati alla Lungara.

2.1 A Brief History of Candelabra

Egypt was generally credited with the invention of this type of lamp.[5] In all its variety it displays a few constant elements: it always consists of a pedestal, often in the shape of zoomorphic, especially feline legs or supports; a shaft, and a candle or torch holder or disc in which wood or incense could be burned. In the Mediterranean some of the earliest surviving candlesticks, solid gold objects from prehistoric Spain found in Lebrija near Seville, date from *c.* 700 BCE (Figure 2.11). They consist of superimposed circular segments that vaguely recall a tree trunk or reed, and were probably used in the cult of a fertility goddess. The first surviving literary accounts date from the same period: they are mentioned in the *Odyssey*. Anthropomorphic candelabra, made of gold, are mentioned to show the opulence of the Palace of Alcinous in the *Odyssey*.[6]

Figure 2.11 The 'Candlesticks' of Lebrija, Spain, late eighth–early seventh century BCE, gold, *c.* 1 m high, found near Lebrija (Sevilla) Madrid: Archaeological Museum.

The earliest surviving examples from Greece usually consist of a tripod with feline legs, a shaft, and an anthropomorphic figure carrying the candle holder or disc. Sometimes the shaft is decorated with acanthus leaves. Etruscan candlesticks, also made usually of bronze, combine very plastic feline or human legs with a dancing figure carrying the candle or torch (Figure 2.12).[7]

Figure 2.12 Etruscan candelabrum, *c.* 550 BCE, bronze, 120.6 cm high, Rogers Fund, 1903, New York: Metropolitan Museum.

Early Imperial specimens basically follow this same design pattern, but show much greater formal and iconographical variety. Sometimes they sport fluted shafts, sometimes reeds. Both the British Museum and the Louvre display tripods with Medusa heads. The bronze candelabrum from the House of Diomedes in Pompei, now in the National Museum of Archaeology in Naples, shows an interesting combination of a Doric-looking shaft, supported by lion's claws, ending in a lamp-arm consisting of Corinthian tendrils. Sometimes these tendril-

shaped lamp arms were held in the hands of statues of young boys.[8]

2.1.1 Roman Candelabra and Their Survival

Surviving specimens from the Imperial period, such as the ones now on display in the Salle Piranèse in the Louvre, are generally more elaborate (Figure 2.13). Instead of a straight shaft they have a baluster, a shaft in the shape of a bottle or vase; sometimes they even have several vases, superimposed one on the other. According to popular iconography, the etymology of baluster is the ancient Greek *balaustion* or pomegranate, which was believed to be a symbol of divine Law. Hence, some scholars have argued, the presence of this type of candelabrum in depictions of the Virgin and Child.[9]

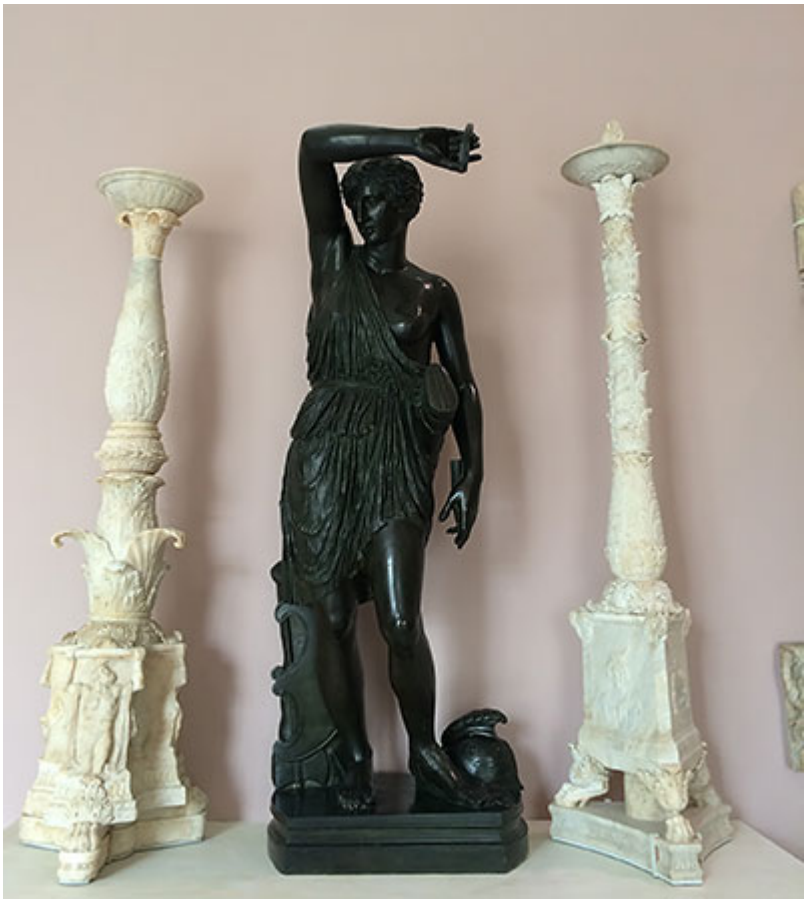

Figure 2.13 Two marble candelabra from the first-second century CE, Paris: Musée du Louvre, Salle Piranèse.

This candelabrum type would survive after the end of the Roman Empire through its presence in early Christian churches and mausolea such as Sant' Agnese or nearby Santa Costanza. The candelabra standing there would be among the most prized exhibits in the Museo Pio-Clementino, and were often recorded, in word and image, from the sixteenth century.[10] As mentioned, Piranesi drew two of them in his etching of the interior of S. Costanza included in the *Opere Varie*.[11] In the *Proemio* to the second edition of the *Vite*, Vasari mentions them to illustrate his

claim that architecture fared better than painting or sculpture once Rome had converted to Christianity, because Saint Peter's, like the other early Christian basilicas freely used 'columns, bases, capitals, architraves, mouldings, doors and other incrustations and ornaments, which were all taken from…the edifices most magnificently built in earlier times': a list that very much recalls the kind of antique fragments Piranesi would employ to create his candelabra.[12] Sometimes this Roman type would be adapted to Christian iconography, as in the candelabrum in San Paolo fuori le Mure in Rome from the twelfth century, where images of Christ and the Saints would be inserted among the acanthus foliage (Figure 2.14).

Figure 2.14 Marble candelabrum, twelfth century, Rome: San Paolo fuori le Mura.

According to the census of Antique sculpture known in the Renaissance by Rubinstein and Bober, a drawing made *c.* 1430 in the circle of Ghiberti is the first documented sign of a revived interest in antique candelabra as objects to be imitated and

revived. Now in the British Museum, it shows a triangular basis of a Neo-Attic candelabrum from the first century CE, that had stood in the church of San Lorenzo in Tivoli. The basis of this candelabrum was bought by the Venetian collector Cardinal Domenico Grimani in the 1590s. It became part of the collection of the Republic of Venice, where Piranesi could certainly have seen it (Figure 2.15). It was drawn by Giuliano da Sangallo, and included in major drawing collections such as the Codex Escuraliensis. In a ruined condition it signified the ruin of Pagan religion, for instance in the *Madonna della Quercia* (*c*. 1500), once attributed to Raphael and now in the Prado (Figure 2.16). It also figures in Giovanni Bellini's *Episode from the Life of Publius Cornelius Scipio* (after 1506), where it has become a wall tablet (Figure 2.17).[13]

Figure 2.15 Triangular basis of a Neo-Attic candelabrum from the first century CE, marble, Venice: Museo Grimani.

Figure 2.16 Raphael (1483–1520), attr., *Madonna della Quercia*, oil on wood, 144 × 110 cm, 1518/19, Madrid: Prado.

Figure 2.17 Giovanni Bellini (1430–1516), *Episode from the Life of Publius Scipio*, grisaille, 74.8 × 356.2 cm, after 1506, Samuel H. Kress Collection, Washington: National Gallery of Art.

The candelabrum in the early Christian basilica of Sant'Agnese fuori le Mure, also of the Neo-Attic variety, and probably of the Hadrianic period, was probably one of the first, if not the first of this type to be imitated as a sculptural object, and not copied, drawn, or painted for the imagery it carried.[14] With the excavation of Hadrianic candelabra at Tivoli in the 1640s this type became more prominent.[15] Until quite recently they were considered as reasonably complete, authentic objects from Hadrian's age, but recent investigations have shown that the restorer Cavaceppi tinkered quite substantially with them, moving around bits and integrating parts from other candelabra. The result is now considered rather as an eighteenth-century pastiche.[16] They are at present in the Museo Pio-Clementino, but similar Hadrianic candelabra are also on display in the Louvre. The Farnese candelabrum in Naples has large birds that are very similar to the cranes of one of the Ashmolean candelabra (Figure 2.24). This was presented in the eighteenth century as a restored original from Hadrian's period, but is yet another bricolage or pastiche.[17]

Figure 2.24 Roman Candelabrum with Cranes, marble, now considered to be made out of some Roman fragments and eighteenth-century additions in the environment of Piranesi, Naples: National Archaeological Museum.

2.1.2 The Paschal Type

From the fifteenth century onwards a second type would be developed, in some respects the successor to the Medieval candelabra made to carry the Paschal Candle. These were

developed in the Quattrocento designs attributed to Leon Battista Alberti, or by Maso di Bartolomeo, and were made of bronze, more than two metres high. They look very different from the Graeco-Roman type, as they represent trees, and allude in their numerous branches to the Menorah. The most conspicuous example is in Santo Stefano in Prato.[18] This second type is much more elaborate. Acanthus leaves or balusters are not the main parts of their design, nor the clear anthropomorphism of early Greek and Etruscan examples. Instead the shaft is hidden from sight by a vertical proliferation of ornament, often grotesque.[19] Andrea Briosco's rectangular bronze paschal candelabrum for San Antonio in Padua is the most famous representative of this type (Figure 2.3). Made between 1507 and 1515 it is almost four metres high, and combines elements of a pagan altar adorned with sphinxes and satyrs, with a Jewish and Christian iconography of sacrifice, and reliefs showing the *artes liberales*. In its heterogeneous composition it seems to announce the layering and incoherent iconography that also distinguishes Piranesi's candelabra.[20] Another famous example, and one that Piranesi would almost certainly have seen, is the one by Maffeo Olivieri in the Basilica of San Marco in Venice. Here feline legs and lions' heads support layers of grotesque figuration, to culminate in a disc with a burning fire.[21]

Candelabra of this type were also made in Florence. There is one, attributed to Giovanfrancesco Rustici (*c.* 1510), now in the Bargello, which has a shaft reminiscent of the Barberini candelabra in its use of balusters and acanthus leaves, but this is supported by a rectangular altar carried in its turn by four turtles. It has sphinxes and rams' heads on its corners, and shows a phoenix rising from its ashes in one of the reliefs. This is part of a Florentine tradition of producing lamp stands that look like antique ones. Verrocchio for instance designed one for the Sala delle Udienze in the Palazzo Vecchio in 1468, and one slightly earlier, in 1445, which is now in the Rijksmuseum (Figure 2.18).[22] Michelangelo probably designed a pair of marble candelabra for the Medici Chapel, and the Bargello in Florence has a fine specimen by Pietro Tacca (Figure 2.19).[23]

Figure 2.18 Andrea Verrocchio (1435–1488), bronze candelabrum, 1465, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum.

Figure 2.19 Pietro Tacca (1577–1640), bronze candelabrum, early seventeenth century, Florence: Bargello.

Grotesque figuration also dominates a subgenre of this type: engraved, drawn, or painted images of candelabra to frame images of the Virgin, as in Antonio Rossellino's bas-relief *Madonna of the Candelabra*, with their insistent bulging balusters, of 1460–75 (Figure 2.20), or the series of candelabrum woodcuts by Nicola da Modena or Francesco Rosselli, designed to frame Lives of Christ or the Virgin (Figures 2.21a and b). In Mantegna's *Death of the Virgin*, now in the Prado, two candelabra of the Sant' Agnese type frame Mary's death bed; and in Ghirlandaio's fresco cycle of her life in Santa Maria Novella in

Florence of 1486–90 illusionistic candelabra give rhythm and structure to the painted space. Such sculpted or drawn images would figure prominently in palaces and churches, in Italy for instance in the sixteenth-century staircase of the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino. More than two centuries later they migrated to France, where they are conspicuous in the Chapel at Versailles. The panels of the lower walls at the entrance by Lecot and Dumont show a fusion of the trophy and candelabrum motif; in the panels of the pillars of the nave and lower walls the same combination of motifs returns, here designed by François-Antoine Vassé and Lecot.

Figure 2.20 Workshop of Antonio Rossellino (1427–79), *Madonna of the Candelabra*, 1460–75, polychromed and gilded stucco with

polychromed and parcel-gilt wood frame, 127 × 87. 13 × 15.24 cm, Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum.

Figure 2.21a Francesco Rosselli (1448–after 1508), decorative

border panel with flaming candelabra ornamented with foliate designs, swags, and a cow's skull, from *The Life of the Virgin and Christ*, engraving, 23.5 × 4.3 cm, 1490–1500, New York: Metropolitan Museum.

Figure 2.21b Francesco Rosselli (1448–after 1508), decorative border panel with candelabra, shells, swags, and heads of putti, from *The Life of the Virgin and Christ*, engraving, 23.5 × 4.3 cm, 1490–1500, New York: Metropolitan Museum.

A third variety, related to the paschal candelabrum, is that of the funerary monumental candlestick, displayed in three dimensions flanking catafalques, or in a flattened variety in wall tombs. The theatre set designers family of the Galli-Bibiena often made them, and since Piranesi studied briefly with their eighteenth-century descendants, he may very well have seen some of their drawings (Figure 2.22).[24]

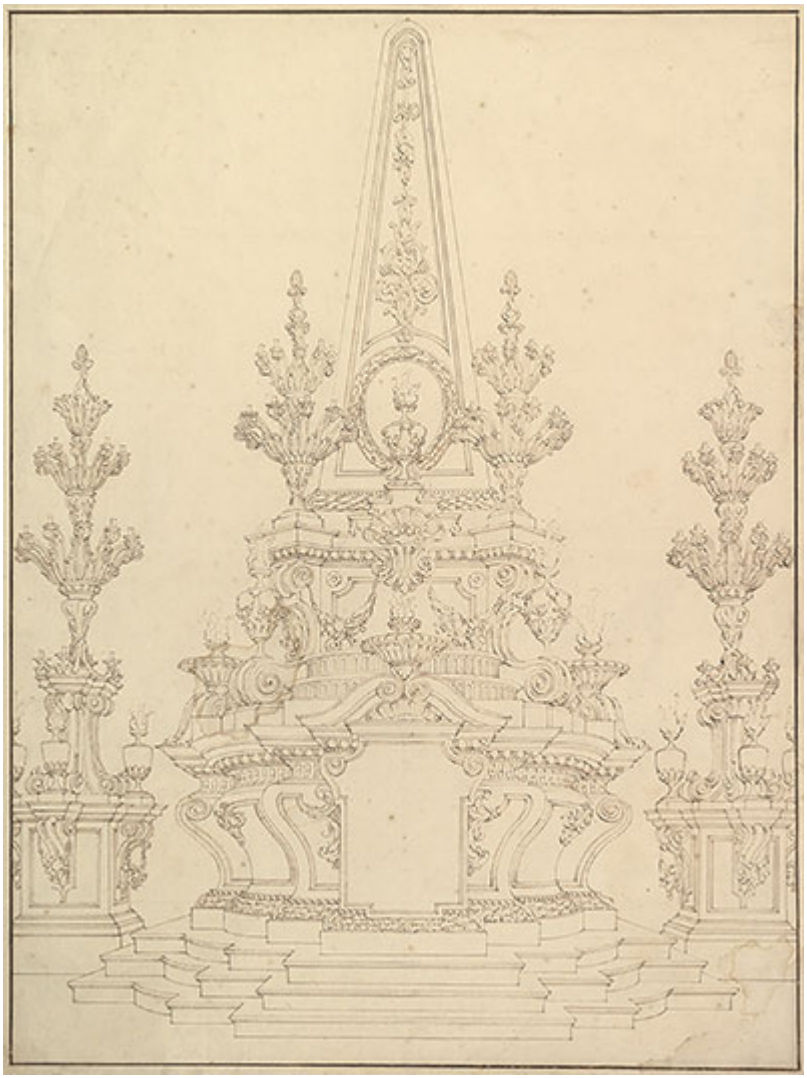

Figure 2.22 Workshop of Giuseppe Galli-Bibiena (1696–1756), *Elevation of a Catafalque*, drawing, 57.8 × 43.5 cm, 1696–1756, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, by exchange, 1972 New York: Metropolitan Museum.

The design for a 'grande torchère' by Claude Ballin, now in the V&A, of *c.* 1672, is particularly intriguing, since in its baroque layering it includes the kind of vases or urns with canine or

vulpine handles that we will also see included in Piranesi's *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi*, in particular the vase for 'Signor Dalton' (Figures 2.23a and b).[25]

Figure 2.23a Claude Ballin (1615–1678), *Grande Torchère*, pencil on paper, seventeenth century, London: V&A.

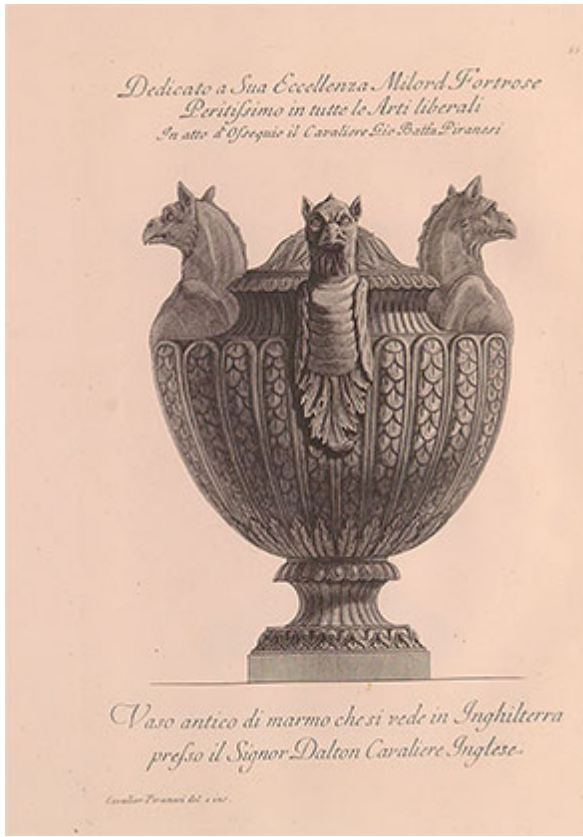
Dedicato a Sua Eccellenza Milord Fortrose
Peritissimo in tutte le Arti liberali
Da atto d'Ossequio il Cavaliere Gio Batta Piranesi
Vaso antico di marmo che si vede in Inghilterra
presso il Signor Dalton Cavaliere Inglese

Figure 2.23b Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vaso antico di marmo che si vede in Inghilterra presso il Signor Dalton*, from *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*…(Rome: n.p., n.d. 1780).

A few tentative conclusions can be drawn from this all too brief sketch. In the first place, given the increasing presence of the Hadrianic type after the excavation of the Barberini candelabra and their display in the Museo-Pio Clementino, and bearing in mind Piranesi's claims that what he had made were authentic 'Roman works', it would seem likely that he would have reverted to the Hadrianic type. But when one compares the variety developed by Riccio, Tacca, Michelangelo and others, the surviving Hadrianic copies, and Piranesi's trio, a different picture results. He adopted the Italian Renaissance design pattern, with

its layering of grotesque figuration and iconographic incoherence, but within such a compositional procedure employed fragments from Pantanello. So instead of Renaissance grotesque figuration he uses Graeco-Roman masks, vegetal motifs, mythological birds, Medusa heads or the apparatus of sacrifice, all of which he could either have excavated at Pantanello or seen in the major Roman collections of Antiquities; the Farnese collection for instance included a specimen distinguished by prominent birds which is now in the Museo Archeologico in Naples (Figure 2.24).[26]

In other words, he continues the formal schemata of Riosco, Tacca, or attributed in the eighteenth century to Michelangelo, but uses it to compose new Roman artefacts, using Roman fragments and their copies. A brief comparison with the candelabra and their pedestals made after designs by Michelangelo and by Tacca may clarify this. In the case of these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sculptors, their individual sculpting styles stand out from Roman models. Second, their handling of grotesque or mythological motifs is clearly recognizable as an early modern elaboration, transformation, or appropriation of Graeco-Roman inspirations such as the grotesques in the Domus Aurea or Raphael's use of them in the Vatican. In the case of Piranesi, there is no stylistic individuality or innovation on this level of fabrication. We have to look carefully to discern Imperial parts from restorations and later additions. But this employment of Hadrianic elements to compose candelabra that are much closer to recent developments of the Christian/Grotesque type is one of the reasons why they look odd, and proved to be so difficult to classify and display. In the third place, next to being a hybrid of post-classical composition and Hadrianic elements, Piranesi's candelabra also recall the fusion of the trophy and the candelabra visible in seventeenth-century French designs. All this suggests that Piranesi's works are not only exercises, despite his claims to the contrary, in restoring or recreating a Roman type of artefact. Instead, in their layering of antique fragments, they look like piled-up trophies of antiquities.

2.2 Roman Candelabra and Their Cultural Meanings

Roman candelabra are just as little studied as their eighteenth-century descendants, since they have, like the large majority of Roman or Greek precious or luxury objects of interior design, suffered from a bad press that started with Pliny and his prejudices against luxury, which has lasted to the present day. Even in Laurence Wallace-Hadrill's recent fundamental study of Graeco-Roman material culture in the Augustan period, they are relatively neglected, like all lamps.[27] What did not help either is that candelabra, like many Graeco-Roman lamps, and particularly the thymiaterion variety, do not have a stable iconography, conveniently linked to their function or use, or a particular artist or even school. Despite their material solidity they lack a consistent appearance or functional identity, which is illustrated by the difficulty to reconstruct a clearly differentiated lineage of candelabra as distinguished from thymiateria.

From their earliest documented presence, in Homer for instance, they have a double role and what we could call an unstable ontological status, because they were often identified with their owners or users. In Homer's *Odyssey* anthropomorphic wooden or bronze candelabra are connected with the custom of having slaves hold up lamps during festive banquets, and this association would continue to be evoked or revived throughout antiquity.[28] But they also had a religious role, either as votive gifts or as instruments of ritual illumination—even today archaeologists do not agree. Surviving sources seem to suggest that these objects, which by the first century BCE had grown into a major category of what we would now call the luxury industry, had moved away from their religious contexts, in which they would flank statues of divinities and illuminate temples, to become the illuminators of the homes of the very rich. The sources also speak of material excess, erotic associations and intense engagements, if not identifications of humans with them.

In Cicero's speeches against Verres, the rapacious governor of Sicily, we can observe the transformation, sometimes enforced, of artefacts originally destined to be cult objects into luxury items coveted by collectors for their excessive materials, cost, and

beauty. The sons of King Antioch XIII of Syria had a sumptuous candelabrum made of precious stones, which they wanted to offer to the recently built temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. As the temple was not quite finished when the candelabrum arrived in Rome, they had it stored, but Verres asked to have it brought to his own house to admire it at leisure, and refused to give it back to the Syrian princes. They claimed their property publicly, in the Forum, where the core of their argument was that the candelabrum was a sacred object, already consecrated by their intention to give it to Jupiter, and that therefore it should not fall into the hands of a private collector.[29]

In the previous chapter we already briefly looked at Pliny's account: he offers, in the course of his treatment of metals and the artefacts that can be made from them, a tale about a Roman patrician lady who pays the sum of 50.000 sestertii for a particularly fine candelabrum, because it combines the excellence of the two major workshops at the time, Aegina, which specialized in the upper parts, whereas Tarentum was the place to go to for the stems.[30] At the sale a slave is thrown in, who has to perform naked for her during the banquets illuminated by this candelabrum. The lady appreciates his charms so much that she has an affair with him, and leaves him her entire estate in her will. After her death the slave, now a rich man, reveres the candelabrum instead of a god, or *numinum vice* as Pliny puts it.[31]

These changes in character and status, from a sacred religious object to a precious collector's item, spirited away from the public domain into the restricted domain of the governor of Sicily, or the object of what we would now call fetishistic adoration, are a prefiguration of the fate of many cult objects in the eighteenth century. It also points to the unstable status of these objects: very precious, intended by their patrons to become cult objects, they end up, because of their very materiality, in a private collection, where the appreciation of its materials and workmanship far exceeds any real value based on use. This anecdote is in fact a very suggestive illustration of how materials and artefacts acquire what Marx would call surplus value, and what we might now call object fetishism, because of their virtuoso technique, provenance, sheer brilliance, and rarity of the

materials used.

In Petronius' *Satyricon* Trimalchio recalls his early days as a young slave. Here we find the same story of the slave becoming the lover of his masters, as well as an identification between the person and a candelabrum, but it operates in a different way:

> Well, as I was just saying, self-denial has brought me into this fortune. When I came from Asia I was about as tall as this lampstand. In fact I used to measure myself by him every day, and grease my lips from the lamp to grow a moustache quicker. Still, I was my master's favorite for up to fourteen years. No disgrace in obeying your master's orders. Well, I used to amuse my mistress too.[32]

Here human-thing entanglement is manifested through choice of words. Trimalchio calls the lamp stand not *candelabrum*, but *candelabrus*, which as Ruth Bielfeldt has demonstrated, transforms the neutral artefact into something more close to living, gendered beings; second, he uses the words 'rostrum barbatum', which in this context means a 'a bearded kisser', when describing how he would put the oil from the lamp on his lips.[33] The use of 'rostrum' is very suggestive here, as it can refer both to a snout or a beak, the nozzle of a lamp, or a face in a colloquial way. Rostral columns, which Piranesi frequently depicted, are free-standing columns decorated with animal snouts taken from enemy ships displayed as trophies. We will meet them again in Chapter 4. Trimalchio, by his choice of words, suggests some deep underlying identity between the candelabrum and himself, measuring himself against it, and hoping to draw some of its attractiveness from it. The closeness between humans and candelabra is also shown way in a Pompeian wall painting recently discussed by Ruth Bielfeldt, which shows a slave holding lights next to a statue performing the same task.[34] Such imaginative entanglement, in which the human interacts with the object and identifies with it, will return around 1800.

But there is yet another aspect to the ill-defined ontological status of candelabra in Graeco-Roman Antiquity. Like most lamps, they were very frequently considered to be capable of movement and animation, conscious, able to see, witness of all

they illuminate, in brief, to be alive. Ruth Bielfeldt has recently argued in her ground-breaking article on the question why so very often Graeco-Roman lamps were designed in the shape of animals and humans, that these claims are not as ill-founded or counter-intuitive as they might seem, when considered in the context of classical theories of visual perception.[35] She quotes a wide range of sources, from Plutarch's *Symposiaka* to Lucian's *True History*, that testify to the belief that lamps were the witness, sometimes unwillingly, of the things, persons and events they illuminated. Plutarch records the Pythagorean custom of the Romans that forbade them to extinguish lamps during a banquet, or when somebody was still present, because one should not kill any living being as long as it does no harm. Lamps, like fire, are alive. They move, need nourishment, and cry out when extinguished.[36] They are capable of sight like humans and animals because their very action, to throw light, is so very similar to the way sight was thought to work: by the active extramission of particles that touch, and are bounced back by the objects they reach.

In Lucian's science fiction tale *True History* one episode takes place on a planet called *Lychnopolis* or Lamp Town. It is too good not to quote in full:

> Sailing the next night and day we reached Lamp-town toward evening, already being on our downward way. This city lies in the air midway between the Pleiades and the Hyades, though much lower than the Zodiac. On landing, we did not find any men at all, but a lot of lamps running about and loitering in the public square and at the harbour. Some of them were small and poor, so to speak: a few, being great and powerful, were very splendid and conspicuous. Each of them has his own house, or sconce, they have names like men, and we heard them talking. They offered us no harm, but invited us to be their guests. They have a public building in the centre of the city, where their magistrate sits all night and calls each of them by name, and whoever does not answer is sentenced to death for deserting. They are executed by being put out. We were at court, saw what went on, and heard the lamps defend themselves and tell why they came late. There I recognised our own lamp: I spoke to him and enquired how things were at home, and he told me all about them.[37]

Here we find a very witty play on lamps' often unwilling role as witness of what they shine their light on, and once one realizes this, it is very striking to see how often Graeco-Roman lamps play in their design on the similarity between giving light and seeing. There are many examples—a number of which, as we shall see, will turn up in Piranesi's *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi*—that show the openings for candle wicks in the shape of a human being, or that perform before our eyes a pantomime of light reflected and frightening the reflecting agent. The motif of the *lucerna viva*, the living lamp, is a frequent topos in Greek and Roman poetry, where often the lamp is addressed as a shining eye, or as a glowing face; equally often, in Latin, the word *rostrum*, snout or beak, is used indiscriminately of animals, persons or objects with a beak-like appearance, such as lamps. The conscious lamp, a witness of the acts it illuminates, is a standard topic in erotic poetry. Thus in Lucian's *Cataplus* the lamp is so horrified by what it has to witness in the bedroom where it stands, that it tries to extinguish itself by refusing to drink its lamp oil. Lamps thus are witnesses, who know what goes on in front of them, and are therefore literally *conscius*.[38] Although in Antiquity the religious role and meanings of candelabra were quite separate from these literary tropes, they will be brought together, as we shall see, in Piranesi's recreations and juxtapositions of candelabra and other types of lamps in the *Vasi, Cippi.*

2.3 Piranesi's Candelabra and Roman Specimens

Now when we put Piranesi's candelabra next to those surviving from Roman antiquity, which are close to the thymiaterion type, and which he knew very well, it is striking to see how very different his are. Compared to their clearly visible structure with its pedestal, shaft and light-bearing disc, largely derived from the acanthus plant and Corinthian forms, and quite sober iconography of gods and small Erotes, his work present a very riot of ornament, a profusion of elements taken from altars, the theatre, sarcophagi, furniture, not to forget his creation of new types for mythological beasts such as the birds of Lake

Stymphalos, nor his tendency to duplicate and reverse classical motifs: in his candelabra the lions' claws are not simply content to carry a pedestal, but when doing so enliven their performance of this task by biting in their own claws. Another case of duplication or excess is the inclusion, in the Ashmolean candelabrum with elephant heads, of a second supporting element derived from Roman altars, halfway through. It is also striking to see that he almost completely hides the connecting shaft or tree trunk. To compare one of the Ashmolean candelabra with the ones in the Museo Pio-Clementino that came from S Agnese fuori le Mure is particularly instructive: the Roman ones, probably from the Augustan era, display a consistent ornamentation derived from acanthus leaves (Figure 2.8). Their tripod pedestal is decorated with Erotes in tendrils, on the lower part are Roman sphinxes, and on the upper part rams' heads. Perhaps not a very rich iconography, but relatively straightforward when compared to Piranesi's cornucopia of animals' heads and claws, their exotic choice—elephants and stork-like hybrids—and his much greater variety of forms, drawing in the paraphernalia of sacrifice, mythological creatures, hybrids such as the sphinxes or Stymphalian birds, and an allusion to the tales about the origins of candelabra in slaves carrying torches.

Next to this profusion of ornament and riot of allusions, we find a few striking cases of the aspects of candelabra and lamp lore listed by Bielfeldt: animation to begin with, in many of the animals' heads and faces; the suggestion of movement or the capacity to move; an inwardness that suggests consciousness in the elephants' heads; and intent observation in the cranes and eagles of the Ashmolean candelabra, or the theatrical masks of the Louvre candelabrum (Figures 1.9–1.13). In fact in one of the very few of Piranesi's captions in the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi* that actually tells us something about his intentions he describes the fauns in the Vase for James Byers as 'standing attentively'.[39] His candelabra do not offer a consistent system of conventional eighteenth-century iconographical reference, but do suggest some play on observation, attention, sight, and animation. All this would be much more evident if we could see the candelabra in

action, carrying their discs of light in dark spaces lit by other flickering lights. As Bielfeldt puts it in one of her essays on bronze lamps: 'why were candelabra of all things thought to leave such intense visual and emotive impressions? Sculpted as tall trees or reeds and richly equipped with figural lamps (like Christmas trees) candelabra could be perceived as interactive beings….'[40] Goethe was also on to this, in his account of a visit to the museum of Portici, one of the earliest attempts to understand these objects on their own terms, and not as a frivolous subset of larger scale monumental sculpture:

> The lamps are adorned with masks and scrolls according to the number of their wicks, so that each flame illuminates a genuine artistic creation. Tall, slender bronze stands are designed to carry the lamps; suspension lamps, however, are endowed with all kinds of ingeniously conceived figures that when swinging and dangling even exceed the purpose of providing delight and amusement…. Those small house and rooms in Pompeii appeared now both smaller and larger to me; smaller because I imagined them crowded with so many dignified objects, larger because these objects – not simply at hand, but most ingeniously and charmingly embellished and *enlivened* by means of fine art – please and extend the senses in a way the spaciousness of a hall never could.[41]

One of the few things Piranesi said about the candelabrum destined for his own tomb was about light: 'Such an antique eternal lamp, made with such astounding workmanship should be placed on a magnificent round pedestal, next to the tomb of the Author.'[42]

2.4 Piranesi on Composition

Although Piranesi did not say much about his candelabra, or his design method, or the reasons why he chose to produce such puzzling hybrids, there are some clues towards an understanding of his methods of composition in the *Diverse Maniere* and the *Vasi, Cippi e Candelabri.* In the latter he wrote how, working

from the fragments surviving from Pantanello, and using the classical composition principles as outlined by Vitruvius and others, chief among them symmetry, he did not restore these ancient objects, but reconstructed them entirely in the Roman manner. This is a rather puzzling statement, because his candelabra are many things, but not symmetrical, even in the Vitruvian sense, and certainly would not gain his approval. As we saw in Chapter 1, Vitruvius intensely disapproved of Pompeian candelabra. But in the caption to the etching of a marble tripod in the Capitoline Museum dedicated to Edward Walter, Piranesi adds a comment that throws another, and more revealing light on his concept of symmetry:

> The various remains of antique works, which one can see here placed on some of the chimneypieces of my museum, have been arranged by me with such symmetry that the modern work undertaken by me, and which encloses the antique work, forms a connection which makes the whole seem to come from the same antiquity.[43]

Modern works frame, by means of their symmetrical display, antique fragments, which suggests that they all originate in that same Antiquity. As Norbert Miller pointed out, symmetry here alludes not only to the arrangement but also to its modern definition as a mirroring operation.[44] The result is almost an optical illusion, the semblance of integrity and continuity.

But more can be said about the material basis of Piranesi's claims about the authenticity of his work, and the design concept behind it. In the text framing the candelabrum with the stork hybrid Piranesi wrote:

> A perspectival view of an antique marble candelabrum of great weight. It can be seen in the Museum of the Cavalier Piranesi. It is made valuable through its elegant variety and the idea of its incisions, sculpted with delicate taste, and through its sculptures, with graceful distribution in the grotesque manner, in such a way that they don't hinder the general idea of the whole.[45]

Varietà, finezza, leggiadra, grottesco: we seem to have entered here into the vexed domain of ornament, in particular Rococo

ornament, and how to describe it. Piranesi excelled in this kind of ornament in his early career, witness his design for a gondola now in the Pierpont Morgan Library. Classical architectural theory does not give much help here, and the reference to Vitruvian symmetry may have been rather indirect, referring to symmetry in the Vitruvian sense of coherence between parts, rather than the modern mathematical concept of mirroring parts around an axis. In any case it does not tell us very much. On plate 51 (Figure 2.25), showing one of the candelabra intended for Thomas Jenkins, Piranesi added:

A SUA ECCELLENZA
Monsignor D. GIOVAMBATISTA REZZONICO Nipote e Maggiordomo della Santità di N.S. PAPA CLEMENTE XIII
e Gran Priore in Roma della Sacra Religione Gerosolimitana

Figure 2.25 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Plate 51, from *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*…Rome: 1778.

…one of the most perfect works of antiquity, not so much because

> of mass or architecture, as for the refinement of the carving and the variety sculpted in each of the triangles of the pedestals which I have here presented to you in perspective.[46]

They are among the most perfect works of antiquity, not for their bulk and weight, or their architecture, but for their *finezza* of the carving and the *diversità* sculpted in each of the sides of the triangular pedestals. Here again, he is talking about the quality and nature of *surface ornament*.

Now if there is one place where he does talk about surface ornament at great length, it is in the Introduction to his book on chimney ornament, the *Diverse Maniere d'adornare i cammini* published in 1769. The text is mainly known for its polemical defence of Etruscan architecture as the cradle of classical architecture, but also offers an argument in favour of what we would now probably call stylistic eclecticism. The architect should draw not only on the remaining buildings but on the entire range of classical art: medals, intaglios, statues, reliefs, etc. Ornament, that is, should be closely studied, and in particular the ways in which Egyptians and Etruscans motifs were transformed and adapted by the Greeks and Romans. In the *Diverse Maniere* Piranesi shows how this was done by starting from Graeco-Roman, Egyptian and Etruscan furniture and ornament and adapting it to a new typology, that of the chimney. This was a new genre of its own, that did not exist in Antiquity, and it was therefore a very fitting gesture to choose this type to radically extend the classical canon. Chimneys are also a very interesting hybrid, somewhere between architecture, sculptural ornament and interior design. This is typical of what Piranesi called *la piccola architettura*, very close to furniture, that calls for its own laws of decoration, and which by its very dimensions prevents the automatic transfer of large-scale architectural ornament such as used in temple porticos. In fact, as he observes, it is closer to dress than to building, and made, like clothes, not just for usefulness, but for pleasure and enjoyment. Because of mankind's innate pleasure in, and desire for variety, next to the styles of Antiquity the grotesque is also a fit style for this kind of objects, for its mixture of the serious and the gay, the frightening and the

pathetic. In this truly revolutionary text Piranesi not just opens up the range of styles to be used by the designer of chimneys and furniture; he also sets out the rudiments of a natural history of the architecture of the Mediterranean, and tries to understand the laws governing its design, and particularly that of the orders, by an analogy with shell formation.[47]

All this is helpful in giving some background to his inclusion of so many different ornaments in his candelabra, but one underlying issue is not addressed: how does one compose such heterogeneous objects? And can finding an answer to that question help us understand the relation between Piranesi's so-called antique candelabra, and the surviving specimens in the Museo Pio-Clementino?

Whereas the *Diverse Maniere* shows the forms and design concepts that Piranesi propagated, the arguments behind it are presented in the *Parere* of 1765 and the less often read *Ragionamento apologetico in diffesa dell'architettura egizia, e toscana* that serves as a preface to the *Diverse Maniere*. In the *Parere* he argued that architects should employ the entire repertoire of forms used in the age of Augustus and Hadrian: festoons, fillets, masks, heads of stags and oxen, griffins, labyrinth frets, arabesques, hippogriffs, and sphinxes. This should include Egyptian and Etruscan forms as well. Here he also advocates the use of medals, intaglios, and cameos, artistic genres that are distinguished by their stylistic variety and geographical origins from all over the Roman Empire. These are all artefacts that in the Vitruvian tradition did not serve as the main models for the architect, because they are what would now be called hybrids. Again, decorum, tradition, and attempts to reduce architecture to its tectonic essence are thrown out in favour of variety and above all invention: 'Rome is certainly the most fruitful storehouse of this kind', he concludes in the *Ragionamento*, not in the least because Roman Imperial architecture integrated Egyptian, Etruscan, and Greek or Hellenistic elements.[48]

Therefore what he presented as genuine Roman works are in fact imaginative transformations. An art, we might say, of restoration and transformation rather than imitation. Piranesi's

plates for the *Observations* and *Diverse Maniere* show combinations of motifs and forms that are often difficult to decipher (and the iconography of Piranesi's etchings is a notoriously underdeveloped field), except that they often thematize metamorphosis and transformation, from the mineral to the vegetal and the animal, from the natural to the supernatural, or from one material to another. It is not accidental that he put a passage from the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid as an inscription of Plate VII for the *Observations on the Letter of Monsieur Mariette*: 'Rerumque novatrix ex aliis alias reddit natura figuras': Nothing retains its own form; but Nature, the great renewer, ever makes new shapes out of other forms.'[49]

2.4.1 Pompei and Alexandria

Piranesi's aesthetic preferences, as we just saw, go very much against the ideals set out by Vitruvius, which were repeated throughout the early modern classical tradition. He favoured decorum, rationality, and faithful adherence to ancestral customs. Hence he found little to praise in the architectural caprices, slender columns, trompe l'oeil effects and irreal buildings depicted in Pompeian wall painting of the Second and Third Styles. In one of the few surviving discussions of Roman candelabra from antiquity, Vitruvius condemned their representations in Pompeian wall painting, because they defy the laws of logic and statics and good taste (Figure 2.26).[50]

Figure 2.26 Pompeï, House of the Vettii (VI.15.1), detail of a wall in the triclinium, showing candelabra and mythological scenes, 63–79 AD.

The great afterlife of this passage in subsequent condemnations of the Gothic and the Rococo need not detain us here, but the passage does offer an important clue for one of the main inspirations for both Piranesi and the *Style Empire*: wall painting in Pompei.[51] Consider for instance the painted tripod in a Pompeian wall painting that would first be taken up and transformed by Piranesi, and then would enjoy a substantial progeny in the work of the goldsmiths and designers Manfredini,

Percier, and Biennais (Figures 2.27–2.29).

Figure 2.27 Villa Boscotrecase: Alexandrian Landscape, *c.* 20–10 BC, Naples: Archeological Museum.

Tripode antico di Bronzo che si conserva a Portici
nel Museo Reale di Sua Maestà Il Rè delle due Sicilie
Al Signor Cavaliere Roberto Smyth Inglese
amatore delle belle arti
In atto di ossequio il Cavaliere Gio Batta Piranesi D.D.D.

Figure 2.28 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* Plate 44: Tripod with supports in the shape of sphinxes, after the tripod found in 1760 in the Isis temple in Pompei.

Figure 2.29 Isis Tripod in gilt silver by Luigi and Francesco Manfredini, Milan 1811–13, made for Eugène de Beauharnais, now in a private collection.

Piranesi may also have looked to Pompeian compositions of fictive architecture such as those in the Villa at Oplontis (Figure 2.33), for the inclusion of Egyptian elements, and the use of multiple viewpoints in perspective when creating his own paper visions of Roman architecture and material culture.[52]

Figure 2.33 Villa Oplontis, now Torre dell'Annunziata, *c.* 50 AD, Room 8.

Another major ingredient of his transformation of that culture were the findings at Pantanello near Tivoli: a base with griffins, corinthian capitals, bench supports, heads of rams and deer, a vase now known as the Trentham Laver vase, and a large amount of Egyptian or Egyptianizing artefacts and statues, most famously various Egyptianizing statues of Antinous, Hadrian's lover. They show many of the forms and ornaments that Piranesi would use, not simply to copy or to restore, but to appropriate them and transform them into what he felt *could* very well have been Roman artefacts. These objects would next return in many Empire designs. In other words, Piranesi did not literally copy, or faithfully restore artefacts as he saw them emerging from the Pantanello swamp, but he did follow their manner of composition in what he considered himself to be restorations, with the design overdrive that distinguishes much of his work.

2.4.2 Alexandria and Alexandrianism

So how to define this very particular variety of restoration? To give a first answer we need to pursue our genealogy of Piranesi's work even further, for there is yet another ancestor behind these transformations of Hadrianic artefacts: Alexandria.[53] Founded by Alexander the Great, the city developed into the economic and cultural centre of the ancient world during the third century BCE. In the period of ca. 200–30 BC Alexandria truly was a world city, a cosmopolis full of people and artefacts from all over the Graeco-Roman world and its trade connections, reaching into the Middle East, India, China, the Black Sea region, and Africa. As a result of the arrival of an unprecedented variety and abundance of objects, a new objectscape originated that offered a hitherto unparallelled scope of stylistic choice. Also, this artefactual landscape came into being in what might very well be called the archetypical successor state, in which the Ptolemaic rulers very much tried to suggest, in their dress, behaviour, and portraiture, that they were not foreign invaders, but the true restorers of Pharaonic legitimacy.

The resulting new styles were so much more than the 'hybrid' sum of their parts that recently scholars have coined the term Alexandrianism to characterize them.[54] In employing that concept they gave a new lease of life to a term that had been first introduced in eighteenth-century literary history and criticism to define the poetry produced in that city, which stood out according to eighteenth-century Hellenists like Carl Gustav Heyne for its virtuoso, but also frivolous and decadent character, with a preference for learned language and mixing or transforming genres, presenting a silver age after the golden age of the great Attic tragedians and historians.[55] Subsequently it was reintroduced in the 1880s by the archaeologist Schreiber to refer to a style in Alexandrian and Roman sculpture, mosaics and wall painting, distinguished by an interest in the grotesque, the picturesque and the idyllic, and by the frequent representation of wild animals, often uniting Oriental, Greek and Egyptian pictorial and iconographic traditions.[56] Whether such a style actually existed, and whether Alexandrianism is the right term for it, remained much debated; but what this brief overview of the various meanings attributed to art associated with Alexandria

shows, is that it was always associated with what we would now call eclecticism, as well as with opulence, sophistication, and the ambition to combine the very best examples of the arts of the past.[57]

The statues and reliefs of the Ptolemaic rulers represented as Pharaos are probably the best-known example of this new way of combining different styles in one artefact (Figure 2.30), but the architecture of Alexandria also shows this new attitude towards design. Its influence spread across the Near and Middle East, and therefore, now that most monumental architecture in Alexandria itself no longer survives, the more intact monuments of Petra give a very good idea of what has often been called Hellenistic Baroque: the use of broken and elliptic pediments; convex and concave fronts; combinations from different orders into one constellation, for instance combining a Ionic column with a Corinthian or Composite capital, that were unheard of in Greece; and the insistent presence of animal forms, often combining Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman elements in one object or building (Figure 2.31). All these elements, as we have seen, are also present in Pompeii, and in the fragments surviving from the Villa Hadriana, which was the Emperor's conscious attempt to recreate an Alexandrian complex in Italy, as is shown most clearly in the Canopus and Serapaeum (Figure 2.32).[58]

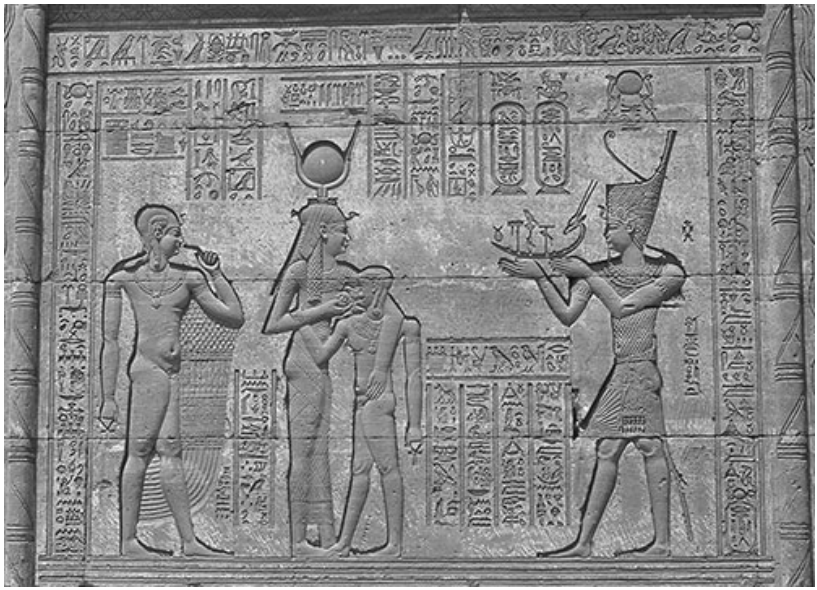

Figure 2.30 The Emperor Trajan represented as Pharaoh in the Temple of Memmisi, Hathor, *c.* 100 CE, now in Rome, Musei Vaticani, Sala a Croce Greca.

Figure 2.31 Petra, El-Dheir, first century CE.

Figure 2.32 Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli Canopus and Serapeum, second century CE.

As Judith McKenzie has recently argued, Alexandrian architecture is the most plausible common ancestor for both Pompeian painted and actual Hellenistic Baroque architecture in Petra. The surviving mosaic and pictorial records of Alexandrian architecture show a use of blue backgrounds we also find in Pompeii. Also, the technique of vanishing point perspective whose use is very conspicuous in Pompeian wall painting was developed in Alexandria, the place where Euclid taught optics in the early third century BCE.[59] The wall-paintings in Room 23 of the Villa of Oplontis near present-day Sorrento for instance (Figure 2.33), of the late Republican or early Imperial period, and decorated in the late second style, which were rediscovered in the eighteenth century, show clear similarities with the façade of the Deir tomb in Petra: they all have the same, distinctive, articulation of a pedimented façade in two flanking elements, connected by an entablature, surrounding a central bay with a segmented or concave pediment.[60] In the Hôtel de Beauharnais designed by Percier and Fontaine for Eugène de Beauharnais, Napoleon's stepson, as in many other Empire interiors, similar

features return as we will see in Chapter 5: the illusionistic wall-paintings of the four seasons for instance recall the wall-paintings at Herculaneum of dancers against dark monochrome backgrounds; in the gilt mouldings combinations of motifs occur that integrate elements from different orders and cultures in the same way as in Petra, combining griffins, eagles, palmettes, and acanthus leaves; and a very frequent feature in many of Percier's designs is the grotesque figure of a naked torso emerging from acanthus leaves, which is also documented in Petra.

This stylistic variety, which used to be called eclecticism, or hybridity, or 'Hellenistic Baroque', was already associated with Alexandria in Antiquity.[61] Accounts of the magnificent floating pavilion decorated with hundreds of marble animals created for Ptolemy II Philadelphos (reigned 285–246 BCE) by Athenaeus, or the reception of Anthony by Cleopatra by Plutarch evoke the overwhelming luxury, defiance of structural logic, stylistic range and sheer excess of these, often ephemeral, structures.

Alexandrianism as a critical concept was introduced, as we saw, in late eighteenth-century literary history to refer to the perceived decline in originality, preciousness and over-refinement of the poetry produced in Alexandria during the Hellenistic period by poets such as Callimachus, who quoted, parodied, reversed, or transformed the great epic poets. The term came to be applied to Roman late-Republican and Augustan poets such as Catullus, Ovid, and Virgil to define their extremely sophisticated appropriations and transformations of Greek models, from Homer and Hesiod to the great tragic poets. The negative connotations of this critical concept, however, should not obscure from view the re-emergence of the aesthetics of variety, opulence, and appropriation of past styles developed in Hellenistic Alexandra in the work of Piranesi or the Empire Style. When one looks at the designs of Percier and Fontaine in their publication of Roman palazzi, they very much recall the sophisticated, overly rich compositional bricolage and chronological layeredness we also find in Alexandrian poetry, or in Pompeian wall painting for that matter (Figure 2.34). In a similar vein fragments from Pantanello, Tusculum, or Roman collections such as the Barberini or the Salviati della Lungara were completed in Piranesi's studio,

like the mouldings in the Louvre candelabrum, but the process only starts here. These fragments are then appropriated, in what I would argue can be described as an Alexandrian aesthetic and approach to styles from the past, to create, or rather, in Piranesi's view, recreate and restore the splendours of Roman, Greek, Etruscan, and Egyptian art, in new compositions that disobey the restraint of Vitruvian decorum, and instead aim at maximum richness, variety, delicacy, and opulence. In the next chapter we will return to the question of restoration, considered not as a design issue, but as a way of recreating the past.

Figure 2.34 Charles Percier (1764–1838) and Pierre-Louis-Léonard Fontaine (1762–1853), *Palais et Maisons de Rome*, frontispiece of Book VIII (Paris 1798).

2.5 A Drastic Change in Appreciation

As mentioned in Chapter 1, both the Oxford and the Louvre candelabra suffered drastic changes in appreciation. In Oxford their aesthetic value rapidly depreciated, and in both cities their museum status changed profoundly, from unique works of art to documents in the history of taste and collecting. These shifts are reflected in their trajectories in both museums, but we are now also in a better position to understand why this happened, and what kind of artefacts we are actually looking at.

To begin with, we have seen that both the Oxford and the Louvre candelabra, in spite of Piranesi's claims to the contrary, are in fact very different from more authentic surviving specimens; their composition, structure, ornament, iconography, and function are completely different. Also, they seem to exhibit a kind of design overdrive that we do not find in the much more demure Barberini candelabra or the ones from the Augustan age at S. Agnese fuori le mure. When considered against the backdrop of candelabra design from the 1430s, when a divergence began between the Roman type and a Renaissance type based on mediaeval Paschal candelabra, they turn out to be very complex, multi-layered hybrids. They combine the composition of Christian candelabra with pagan elements excavated at Pantanello, and were completed in Piranesi's studio with new elements such as elephant heads or theatrical masks. Actually they look more like poles exhibiting excavation trophies.

We have also seen that Graeco-Roman cultural meanings associated with candelabra, ranging from the religious and funeral associations of thymiateria to the erotic and enlivening connotations of lamps, were very different from eighteenth-century ones. Instead of the dominant funeral and Christian connotations of extinguishing mortal light and the endurance of the *lux aeterna*, we find a fascinating range of statements about sight, attentiveness, and witnessing, particularly of erotic situations, to which we will return later in this book. Also, marble candelabra, like bronze lamps, seem to be capable of movement, they dazzle the viewer, but they also have opinions on what they illuminate and thereby reveal and witness. Graeco-Roman lamps very often take human or animal shapes, and Piranesi's candelabra are a kind of excessive culmination of the

formal repertoire of this trend, bringing together the strands of religious and erotic or enlivening connotations. These meanings seem to have been lost from sight in their reception in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, as is shown by the accounts of Visconti of the Galleria dei Candelabri or the Louvre candelabrum. Instead they concentrate entirely on provenance and conventional iconographic analysis.[62]

In the third place, Piranesi places himself squarely in the tradition of Roman workmanship and artistry, but his notion of authenticity is very different from the one that would emerge after 1800. What he actually did, is to use fragments found in Pantanello, and other collections, and use them as the elements from which he would forge his entirely new Alexandrianist compositions. Since he presents them as Roman antiquities, for us this makes them pastiches, or even forgeries. But Piranesi himself took the attitude that since he understood Roman design methods, materials, and craftsmanship as nobody else did at the time, because of his intense and long first-hand experience as an excavator and draughtsman, he was in fact continuing Roman traditions of artistry. This is an attitude that even today occasionally persists, as was shown in the summer of 2016 by the discovery of a forgery of Louis XV chairs in Versailles. The Château had bought, they believed, a complete set of twelve chairs ordered by the King for his State Council, which were authenticated and exhibited. When confronted with the arrival of a thirteenth chair on the antiques market, they asked Louis XV furniture restorers for their opinion. Some replied that for them, the eighteenth century had lasted until the end of the Second World War because materials and techniques had not changed fundamentally.[63] But such an attitude toward authenticity was very much on its way out by the end of the eighteenth century, as a result of Winckelmann's attempt to develop a chronology of Graeco-Roman art, and the increasing awareness of the fact that many classical statues were not Greek but Roman copies, due to the research of the geologist Dolomieu into the properties of various marble varieties available in Italy.

So a profound shift occurred in the appreciation of both the meaning and the status of the candelabra. This is not an isolated

case, but a symptom, I would argue, of the great changes that had taken place from 1760 to 1800 in the way Graeco-Roman art was viewed and appreciated. As is already evident from the reactions at the time to Piranesi's polemic with Julien David Leroy, Laugier, and Mariette, about the origins of architecture and the nature or place of ornament, he was fighting a losing battle.[64] His arguments in the *Parere* and the *Diverse Maniere* in favour of stylistic diversity, variety, richness, and complexity and a vision of creativity that did not start from faithful imitation of the ancients was hopelessly out of date, and put out of fashion by the success of Winckelmann's clear model of the history of ancient art, which tends towards a monostylistic development, and his aesthetic favouring the simple and the transparent. If Winckelmann's beauty resembles a glass of pure water, Piranesi's is more like a complex Barolo with its complex and contradictory layers of murky tar flavours and flowery violet fragrance.

But there is also another, less narrowly art-historical way of understanding the change in appreciation of the candelabra. The events in their lives resonate very strongly with present-day debates about the biographies of objects or the social life of things. Arjun Appadurai famously argued in his *The Social Life of Things* for a methodological fetishism, turning commodity fetishism inside out.[65] Instead of going along with traditional mystifications or reification of commodities as if they possess autonomous lives in the market, Appadurai assumes things have lives, to follow their movements, and thus retraces how human beings endow objects with value across varieties of contexts. Now this becomes really interesting for us the moment things—or human beings for that matter—refuse to stay in their normal domain: in the case of objects when they are endowed with agency or life, or in the case of humans when they are treated as objects. Two processes cross each other in such situations: what the anthropologist Kopytoff called commodification, a homogenizing process through which objects end up as commodities on the market, subject to the laws of value determination through the forces of demand and supply; and its opposite, singularization, through which objects are singled out, set apart from the realm of commodities. For instance, and that is

the kind of examples Appidurai or Kopytoff give, in the case of objects becoming cult objects, which limits their movement of circulation because they are put in a shrine; or when objects move from one cultural context to another, as in the case of ornaments becoming votive gifts. Our candelabra clearly went through both stages; their ancestors in late Republican Rome, as Cicero tells us, started life as sacred objects to end up as a fetish in a collector's home. After their excavation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they went through an accelerated process of commodification, entering on the Roman art market through the agency of Piranesi, Cavaceppi, and dealers such as Jenkins, followed by a new phase of singularization, when they were given by Newdigate to Oxford University, ended up in the Louvre, or in the Museo Pio-Clementino, in a museum setting, withdrawn from commercial circulation.

One of the richest fields in which to explore these ideas is that of the art world around 1800, and the massive changes it underwent: as a result of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars thousands of objects were uprooted from their cult, court or collectors' habitat, travelled across Europe, and ended in newly founded museums, art galleries, and very often on the art market. The next chapter will look at the ways in which ancient objects travelled, and how the immense increase in connectivity that took place around 1800 affected ideas about what kind of objects actually possessed the power to make antiquity present again.

Piranesi's Candelabra and the Presence of the Past: Excessive Objects and the Emergence of a Style in the Age of Neoclassicism. Caroline van Eck, Oxford University Press. © Caroline van Eck 2023. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192845665.003.0003

[1] Cf. Sørensen 2007: 171–203, plates 20 and 21.

[2] Cain 1985: no. 106 and 7, pp. 189–90; on Jenkins' activities as a dealer in Rome see Ashby 1913; Ford, 1974: 416–25.

[3] Cain 1985: no 99–103, pp. 185–7.

[4] Braun 1854: 346–50, 485–6 (Santa Costanza) and 491 (Sant' Agnese).

[5] There exists no historical overview of candelabra from Antiquity to the eighteenth century; Jahmuth 1967 is a first survey with good visual documentation. In his description of the Louvre candelabrum Ennio Quirino Visconti lists a large number of primary classical and Biblical references; he also discusses the belief that candelabra are an Egyptian invention. See 'Le Musée Pie-Clémentin', in Visconti 1819, vol. IV: 3.

[6] *Odyssey* VII.100–3; cf. Kokolakis 1980: 89–113; Pugliara 2003: 86–113.

[7] Testa and Sannibale 1989.

[8] For recent images see Bielfeldt 2018.

[9] On the origins of balusters see Llewellyn 1977; Davies and Hemsoll 1983: 1–23, 117–22, which note uses of the word in fifteenth-century documents and explore its connotations for sixteenth-century designers. See also Visconti 1803 no. 5, for a discussion of balusters in Graeco-Roman candelabra and the etymology of the term and its mythological associations.

[10] See Biscontin 1994.

[11] Piranesi 1750: 52; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Estampes G.*c.*30, in fol.; Focillon 2001 [1918]: 17.

[12] Vasari 1996: 34–5.

[13] Cf. Tresidder 1992: 660–3.

[14] Gallo 2007: 209.

[15] See Gallo 2007. On the Barberini excavations see De Franceschini 2017: 144–63.

[16] De Franceschini 2017: 150, whose analysis is based on recent autopsy and Cassidy 1990: 99–103. Jenkins incidentally believed them to be Greek, and made during the reign of Alexander the Great.

[17] See Panza 2017: 235–6.

[18] *L'Uomo del Rinascimento* 2006: 317; Cervini 1997.

[19] Bacchi and Giacomelli 2008: 42, fig. 26.

[20] On Riccio see Bacchi and Giacomelli 2008 and Banzato 2009.

[21] Planiscig 1927: 321–3, who also shows a photo of a candelabrum from Riccio's workshop now lost.

[22] Mozzati 2010: cat. nr 31 and p. 72; see also in the same volume Sénéchal 2010.

[23] On the candelabra in the Medici Chapel see Hartt n.y.: 175–6: 'It has

been shown that the only point of view from which all the elements of the Chapel and their interrelationships become visible is that of the priest behind the altar ….[The] celebrant stood between two candlesticks. On the Gospel side was represented the pelican […]. On the Epistle side was the fenix, which Michelangelo had already represented in the ornamentation of the Tomb of Julius II as a symbol of Christ's resurrection.'

24 Cf. Zeitler 2004: nrs 49, 50, 90, 92, and 94. For their use in Versailles see Sabatier and Saule 2015: 196–236.

25 See Maës 2013.

26 Although this one is now also considered as an eighteenth-century pastiche, made in the circles of Piranesi; see Panza 2017: 235–6.

27 Wallace-Hadrill 2008. The brief sections in Burckhardt 1868: §§ 146 and 149, pp. 245 and 249, are probably the first attempts to define the relation between Renaissance marble and bronze candelabra and their Antique ancestors. For Graeco-Roman candelabra the recent survey is Cain 1985.

28 Homer, *Odyssey*, H.100. In his description of the Louvre candelabrum Visconti 1819, vol. IV: 3 lists a large number of primary classical and Biblical references; he also discusses the belief that candelabra are an Egyptian invention.

29 Cicero, *In Verrem* IV.xxviii–xxix.64–8, in *Verrine Orations Part* II, Book 3–5, translated by L.H.G. Greenwood.

30 Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, XXXIV.vi.12.

31 On the similarities between Petronius' and Livy's accounts of attachments to candelabra see Bodel, 1989.

32 Petronius, *Satyricon* 75.10–11.

33 Bielfeldt 2018.

34 Cf. Bielfeldt 2018: 425–8.

35 Bielfeldt 2014.

36 Bielfeldt 2014b: 204, who quotes Plutarch, *Quaestiones conviviales* 7, 4; Schwabl 2000.

37 Lucian, *True History* I.29. The translation is from the Loeb edition by A.M. Harmon, 1913, vol. I, p. 283.

38 Bielfeldt 2014: 209–14, with many references to Greek and Latin texts.

39 Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*…plate 51.

40 Bielfeldt 2014: pp. 171–93, this passage p. 189.

41 Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 3 March 1787.

42 Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri,* caption to plate 107: 'Un tal Lume

perpetuo antico di mirabil lavoro dovrà collocarsi sopra magnifico piedistallo rotondo, dinanzi la tomba dell'Autore.'

[43] Piranesi 1778: caption for plate 89a depicting a tripod for Edward Walter: 'I diversi Avanzi di opere Antiche, che si vedono disposti in alcuni Camini del mio Museo sono stati da me ivi collocati con simmetria tale che il Lavoro moderno da me intrapreso, e che racciude il Lavoro antico forma una connessione che fa sembrare il tutto provenire della stessa Antichità.'

[44] Miller 2003: 125–43, here p. 134.

[45] Piranesi 1778: plate 25: 'Veduta in prospettiva di un candelabro antico di marmo di gran mole. Si vede nel Museo del Cavalier Piranesi. Si rende pregevole per l'elegante varietà e idea dell' intagli con finezza di gusto scolpiti, e sue sculture con leggiadra distribuzione à grottesco disposte, di maniera che non incombrano essi l'idea generale del suo tutto.'

[46] Piranesi 1778: plate 51: '…come una dell'opere le più perfette dell'antichità, non tanto per la mole e per l'architettura, quanto per la finezza dell'intaglio e per la diversità scolpite in ognuno del' triangoli de' prospettive piedistalli vi ho fatti presenti'.

[47] Hyde 2011–12: 323–51.

[48] Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Ragionamento apologetico in diffesa dell'architettura egizia, e toscana* (Rome, 1769, pp. 12–33).

[49] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV.252–3.

[50] Vitruvius, *De architectura libri X*, VII.5.3.

[51] On that afterlife see Gombrich 1968.

[52] On Pompeian mural painting see Tybout 1969, s.v. Torre Annunziata, 275–321 for depictions of façades and interiors, and 325–50 for the issue of Alexandrian influence.

[53] For a survey of its visual culture see exh cat. *La gloire d'Alexandrie*, Paris: Petit-Palais, 1998.

[54] Queyrel 2012: 235–56; Connelly 2015: 173–82.

[55] Heyne 1785: 76–134; Polke 2009; Silk, 'Alexandrian Poetry from Callimachus to Eliot', in: Hirst and Silk 2004.

[56] Schreiber 1885: 385–400.

[57] For a more extensive discussion of Alexandrianism see Van Eck 2018.

[58] This was first noted in Hittorff 1862; see also MacKenzie 2007 100; Curl 2000; MacDonald and Pinto 1995: 106–9.

[59] McKenzie 2007: 100–8.

[60] McKenzie 2007, plates 223–44.

[61] Payne 2008: 168–89.

[62] The increasing loss of iconographical knowledge, combined with a

decreasing belief in the authenticity of Piranesi's works, can be followed very clearly when one compares the successive catalogue notes on the candelabra, already quoted in this chapter: Visconti 1803, nrs 5, 184, 183; Visconti 1817: 67 no 172; De Clarac 1848: 89–90; Fröhner 1869: 303, no. 312, p. 303. For the Museo Pio-Clementino see Visconti 1819, vol. IV: 31–64 for an analysis of the Barberini candelabra. The dissenting voice is that of Emil Braun, who concentrates unlike his colleagues at the Louvre on the visual effect the candelabra would have made in their original location, for instance between columns in a temple: Braun 1854: 472, 346–50, 472, 476, 485–6 (S. Costanza) and 491 (S. Agnese).

63 *Le Monde*, 9 June 2016: 'Le Château de Versailles victime d'un trafic de fausses chaises'.

64 See the Introduction to Wilton-Ely 2002.

65 Appadurai 1986.

3

Making Antiquity Materially Present

What went on in Piranesi's studio, or Museum, as he preferred to call it, is crucial to our understanding of his candelabra. Here as well, opinions vary. It is clear that in the 1760s he diversified his activities, investing more time in restoring and selling Roman fragments than in his etchings because it was more profitable, but he was also inspired by his discoveries of vast amounts of fragments from Hadrian's time at Tivoli and Pantanello in 1769–70. Visitors to the workshop or Museo did not agree on what went on, and to what purpose. James Barry, who as we already saw was just as negative about the architecture of Hadrian's period as about Piranesi's work inspired by it, accused him of completely mercenary motives when he visited the studio in the 1770s. Thomas Jenkins suggested in 1768 that Piranesi was driven by collector's mania, and that he might risk bankruptcy: 'the Cav. of the Candelabri continues to increase his Collection and I think the event must be of cracking his brain, unless he meets with customers'. In 1770 Jenkins further nuanced the image of the studio as a speculative, commercial venture:

> He has composed a Monument for himself, his third Candelabri [sic] is completed, which As he Sais was found tele quale [sic] as well as the other two in Adrian's Villa. he declares he does not want to sell any part of his collection, as You know he is disinterested beyond measure, there can be no doubt of his veracity.[1]

As we know from the letters by Francesco Piranesi and other heirs documenting the subsequent fate of the collection, which ended up for a large part in the Royal Museum in Stockholm, Piranesi was indeed, and possibly increasingly, reluctant to sell

his collection (Figure 3.1).[2]

Figure 3.1 Gustav III's Museum of Antiquities, Royal Palaces in Stockholm, classical sculpture department, showing the rhyton, an urn and a candelabrum sold by Francesco Piranesi.

We will probably never know with any certainty what exactly went on in the studio, or in Piranesi's mind.[3] But what stands out in these activities, and has perhaps not received sufficient attention, is that he never ventured into restoring statues, despite his close working relationship with restorers such as Cavaceppi. Instead he concentrated on fragments, and on fragments of what we would now call either furniture and interior design, or even material culture: vases, funerary urns, tripods, lamps, and some very spectacular chairs, as we will see.

Piranesi's last published work, closely connected to his activities in the Museo, the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*, shares this same lack of clarity of nature and purpose. It has received relatively little attention from Piranesi scholars, who tended until recently to dismiss it as an unfinished, somewhat haphazard sales catalogue, intended to create interests among French, British or Russian collectors.[4] However, there is an argument against this

received opinion: although a substantial amount of objects depicted are from his collection, the large majority of objects shown in *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi* were not for sale, because they were already in Italian or British collections, or in musea like the Museo Kircheriano. Also, many objects shown were not made or transformed by Piranesi. Instead of considering it as a sales catalogue, or mainly as an instrument to create interest in his work, we should consider the *Vasi* in relation to his Museo, as a paper museum that was an integral part, together with the creation of artefacts out of the Pantanello fragments, of his efforts to recreate Roman Antiquity, and in particular what we would now call its material culture of religion.

3.1 The *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…*

The frontispiece of Part One shows in the background a fragment of the frieze of the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina; to the left on the foreground a candelabrum from the collection of the Duke of Gaetani; the Hayward vase; in the middle the mourning river god on display in the courtyard of the Capitoline Museum (Figure 1.4). On the right side we see another candelabrum, and a lustral vase found in the excavations of the Villa Hadriana in 1771. In the foreground are two lamps (indicated by the letters F and G) from the Museo Kircheriano in the Propaganda Fide on Piazza di Spagna, and another one, H, from the collection of Sir William Hamilton. This apparently disorganized jumble of statues, roman artefacts and restorations is in fact an announcement of the main themes of the collection, presided over by the melancholy rivergod: lamps, funerary objects, and the material culture of religion, taken from Piranesi's own excavations at Tivoli, the collections of patrons and friends, but also from the ethnographical collections of Athanasius Kircher and Stefano Borgiano. The sequence of *c*. 108 plates (depending on the edition) that follows displays an alternation of considerably restored or reconstituted vases such as the Warwick Vase, funerary urns, lamps, some furniture or what Piranesi called *piccolo architettura*, such as an Etruscan chariot from his

collection, fragments of roman reliefs, sarcophagi, and candelabra as represented on the frontispiece of the book. The sequence is structured by an alternation of etchings of funerary vases with these other objects. Another unifying feature is the consistent use of Corinthian and acanthus elements: tendrils, acanthus leaves, and palmettes. Part Two shows the same pattern of alternating vases, candelabri, reliefs, and furniture, but also includes some very conspicuous tripods, a *sedes curulis* or ceremonial chair supported by wolves, and images of the candelabrum he designed for his own grave. All this suggests that the unifying theme of the publication is that of death and revival or immortality (the acanthus, as is well documented, was associated with Apollo and, because it is an evergreen plant, with eternal life).[5]

The two etchings of a monumental marble rhyton with a boar's head for instance (Figure 3.2a and 3.2b) depict the funerary monument excavated at the Via Appia near the grave of Caecilia Metella. The caption of the second plate stresses its use in funerary ceremonies (and also cleverly evades the question what was original, and what the work of Piranesi's sculptors):

A Sua Eccellenza il Signor Conte de Lincoln
amatore delle belle arti
In atto d'Ossequio il Cavalier Gio Batta Piranesi D.D.D.
VRBANVS·AVON
VERN · ET
FABIA·SVOCESSA

Figure 3.2a Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*…Plate 98: Rhyton with a boar's head, Rome, 1771.

Figure 3.2b Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* Plate 99: Rhyton with a boar's head, Rome, 1771.

Its carvings, which one can see in this tomb, allude to the ceremonies used by the Romans in their funerals. The sculptor has

> forced himself to make art look like nature, which has been imitated, as one can see in the general shape of these carvings.[6]

Both the lamps and the candelabra fit this theme, since they are shown in combination with funerary urns or fragments of sarcophagi, and were used, as in the case of Piranesi's own candelabrum, to prefigure the eternal light of the Resurrection. But the orchestration of this theme is very muted, because it is presented in fragments ruined by time, and the sequence is opened by a frontispiece showing a melancholy river god.

Because a number of objects entered into the collections of Townley or Hamilton, who left them to the British Museum, it is possible to identify them. The lamp in the shape of an African man's head for instance, included in Plate 8 (letter B, Figure 1.6), dates from the Early Roman Imperial period. It was drawn by Townley, and as he noted, 'Found in 1773 near Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome'. In the same plate, the lamp in the form of a pine cone, with a nozzle emerging from one end, below which is a bust of Cupid supported by a calyx, can be dated to the Roman Imperial period, probably second century. The lamp in the shape of a trussed deer depicted in Plate 11 is Egyptian; and the bronze chariot with the goddess Luna in plate 7a was also found near Santa Maria Maggiore (Figure 1.5). Drawn by Jenkins it was sold to Townley in 1781.[7]

Many artefacts included in *Vasi, Candelabri* display animal features that have very old pedigrees in Mediterranean material culture, and were produced across the entire Roman Empire. The rams' heads that are so conspicuous in the Louvre candelabrum recall a terra-cotta ram-headed Neo-Assyrian beaker (Figure 3.3), of the eighth–seventh century BCE, found in Iraq, which in turn resembles a very ancient alabaster Syrian ram's head of *c*. 2000 BCE. The funerary monument topped by a rhyton ending in a boar's head in Plate 99 (Figure 3.2 B), which Piranesi had also carved in marble, magnifies a zoomorphic shape that was very widespread in Antiquity, the rhyton ending in a griffin or lion or feline head. Conspicuous examples include the gilt silver one from the Achaemenid Empire, fifth–fourth century BCE and the silver Parthian rhyton with a wild cat's head which are both now

in the Metropolitan Museum, or the monumental marble one with a griffin protome made in Rome in the first century CE which is now on display in Rome (Figures 3.4 and 3.5).[8]

Figure 3.3 Head of a Ram, ceramic, Late Uruk, Southern Mesopotamia, *c.* 3500–3100 BCE, New York: Metropolitan Museum, purchase James N. Spear gift, 1981.

Figure 3.4 Vessel terminating in the forepart of a fantastic leonine creature, ca. fifth century BC, gold, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1954.

Figure 3.5 Rhyton with the forepart of a griffin, Achaemenid, fifth–fourth century BCE, silver, partially gilded, h. 23 cm, London, British Museum.

The range and nature of the artefacts shown here illustrate an infinite richness and variety of forms—for Piranesi the defining characteristic of Roman design: Greek and Roman gods, erotes and savage satyrs; funerary monuments such as sarcophagi and urns; extremely luxurious and costly objects such as the tripods or wolves' chair; but also objects from daily life such as the lamps. Within that richness he also shows a great diversity, from the very civilized to the exotic, savage, primitive, or Barbarian, particularly in the lamps: the obscene and the primitive, the savage and the grotesque are juxtaposed. At the same time, within that infinite variety two themes stand out: the presence of

animals, often where one would not expect them; and the primitive, exotic, or barbarian.

The interleaving of Roman artefacts and the objects Piranesi created from fragments also suggests a third theme. They illustrate how his creations result from, and are related to, the excavated fragments. Thus his tripods (Figure 3.6a and b), which would have a very successful progeny in Empire furniture, for instance in the tripod made by the goldsmith Biennais for Napoleon's adopted son Eugène de Beauharnais (Figure 2.29), are visual demonstrations of the potential of what we would call Roman design to be taken further and thus be given another lease of life.

Al Signor Tomaso Barrett Cavaliere Inglese
amatore e seguace delle belle arti
In atto d' Ossequio il Cavalier Gio Batta Piranesi D.D.D.
Altare antico di marmo ritrovato fra le macerie della Villa Adriana nel sito detto Pantanello. La sua gran Conca
è ornata e sostenuta da due Sfingi assai elegantemente lavorati, e corrispondenti al Secolo felice delle arti al tempo
d' Adriano. Questo Monumento si vede nella raccolta delle antichità del Cavalier Piranesi. Il basamento che regge
quest' ora è stato disegnato da un Monumento antico che si vede nella facciata del Palazzi Barberini verso il Giardino.

Figure 3.6a Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* Plate 31: Tripod on a Pedestal made from a Sarcophagus, Rome, 1771.

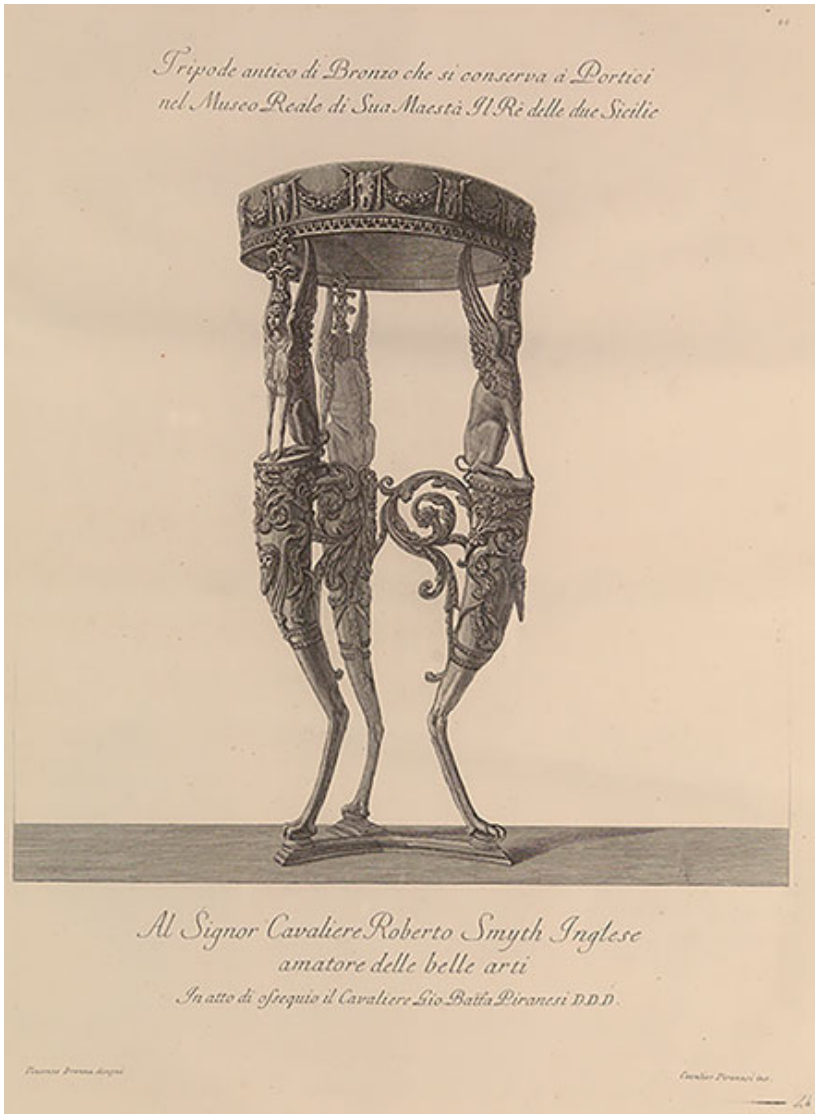
Tripode antico di Bronzo che si conserva à Portici
nel Museo Reale di Sua Maestà Il Rè delle due Sicilie
Al Signor Cavaliere Roberto Smyth Inglese
amatore delle belle arti
In atto di ossequio il Cavaliere Gio Batta Piranesi D.D.D.

Figure 3.6b Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* Plate 44: Tripod with supports in the shape of sphinxes, after the tripod found in 1760 in the Isis temple in Pompei, Rome, 1771.

The *Vase Candelabri e Cippi* are therefore not a sales catalogue, but a paper museum of Roman artefacts. However, it is a paper museum of a very special kind. Unlike that other famous

paper museum, that of Cardinal Pozzo, created in Rome from the 1630s to the 1650s, this is not a visual record of the natural world, or of antiquities in their actual state as they could be observed when they were drawn. Instead it is, first, a record of material culture, including both lamps and chairs, but also of monumental remains, such as parts of temple frieze. Second, it is a series of variations on the theme of death and the survival of forms. In the third place, it also shows the ongoing life, the continuing material presence of Roman art through Piranesi's numerous illustrations of the reconstruction, incorporation, and transformation of Roman art into new forms and genres, such as his tripods or the candelabra. As we saw in the previous chapter, these are very free transformations of the prototypes from the period of Hadrian's rule. Authenticity, one is tempted to conclude, is here a process not a state. This raises again the question, what Piranesi meant, when he called his candelabra and other works displayed in *Vasi*, 'opere romane'; but also, how to understand the restorations of fragments from Tivoli and Pantanello that took place in his studio.[9]

The ambition to restore, complete, and thereby reactivate the material presence of Roman culture that speaks from these etchings makes this paper museum very similar to that other major venture to restore Graeco-Roman culture: plaster cast collections. On the other hand, the presence of the animal, the grotesque, the exotic, and the barbarian, and the insistence on rituals of burial and sacrifice suggest a relationship with a different kind of museum, the proto-ethnographical collections of Kircher and above all the Museo Borgiano. So we will first turn to this collection, and next to the plaster cast collections, and then consider late eighteenth-century restoration as another set of manifestations of this Piranesian ambition to restore the material presence of Antiquity.

3.2 The Museo Borgiano and Related Ethnographic Collections

There had been some antiquarian publications on Roman lamps

in the seventeenth century, of which the most familiar is the one by Pietro Santi Bartoli and Giovanni Bellori, which includes some lamps similar to those etched by Piranesi (Figures 3.7a and b).[10] But the places where Piranesi could have seen strange objects themselves, with their exaggerated black faces, contorted gazelle shapes, or hybrid animals, was in the homes of private collectors such as the Duke of Gaetani or the Duke of Salmoneta, and in the collections of Athanasius Kircher and Stefano Borgia. These objects had all, as Piranesi carefully records in the captions to these plates, been excavated in Rome; but their provenance and place of production could have been anywhere across the Roman Empire, from the Italian heartland itself to Egypt, Nubia, or the Middle East. Much has been written about the Museo Kircheriano and its origins in antiquarianism and the Wunderkammer tradition; far less about the Museo Borgiano, which I believe is much more revealing for our purposes.[11] Stefano Borgia (1736–1804), a descendant of the Borgia family, who came from Velletri, 25 miles to the South of Rome, had created a collection of what we would now call ethnographic objects. He asked missionaries to Egypt, Syria, Mexico, India, Nepal, and China, to bring back any objects that could document the civilizations and religious rites of these heathen nations. Not, as nineteenth-century missionaries often were instructed, because taking away these cult objects would be the ultimate sign of subjugation of these cultures, but because he had a genuine interest in the cultures and religions of all peoples.

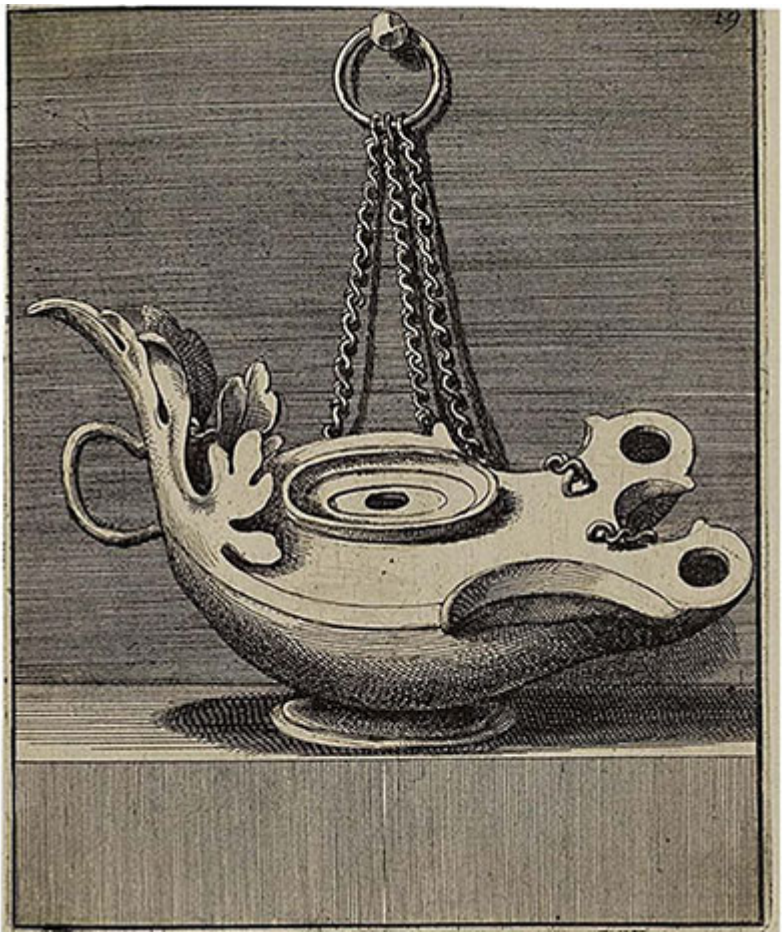

Figure 3.7a Pietro Santi Bartoli (1635–1700) and Giovanni Bellori (1613–1696), *Le Antiche Lucerne,* part II, Plate 19, Rome, 1691.

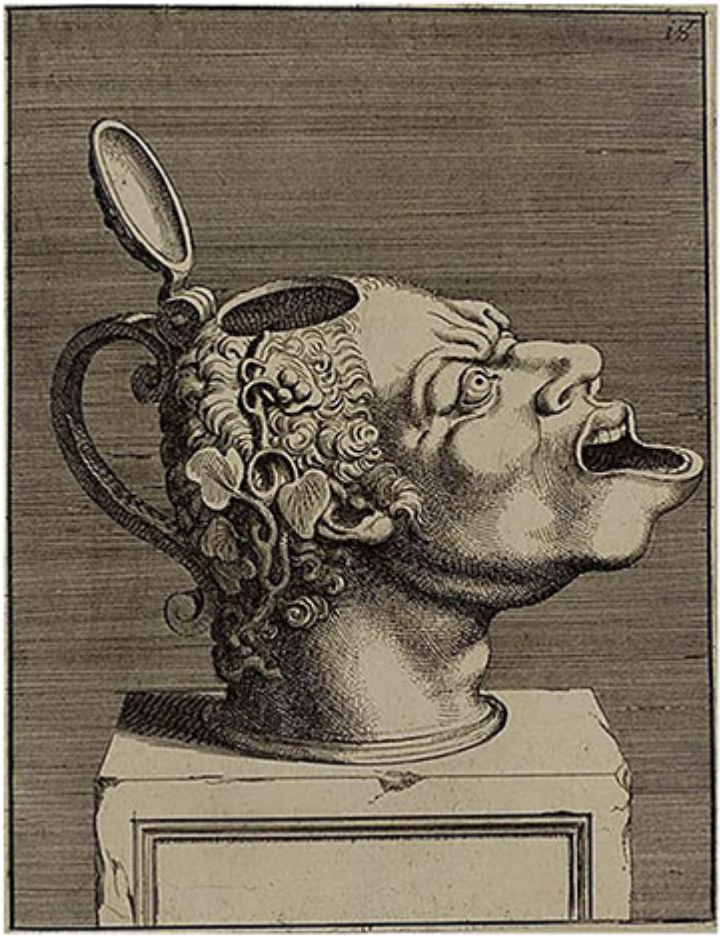

Figure 3.7b Pietro Santi Bartoli and Giovanni Bellori, *Le Antiche Lucerne,* part III, Plate 18, Rome, 1691.

That is, Borgia was very much part of that Enlightenment culture which studied cult objects, in particular statues, and religious ritual across the world from an increasingly secular, and what would now be called anthropological or ethnographic perspective. That tradition started, it may be argued, with François Lemée's *Traité des statues* (Paris 1688), written in reaction to the general public outcry against the monument for Louis XIV erected on the Place des Victoires in 1681 (Figure

3.8).[12] The monument caused such offence because the King was here accorded the iconographical treatment hitherto reserved for God, Christ or the Saints, including an inscription addressing him as the 'divine immortal'. In his defence Lemée compiled a substantial overview of the role of sculpture in various cults across the world. The result was what we would now call the first anthropological and global study of sculpture. What interested him was not the artistic development of that art, but the role it played in society and its origins. In the next century it would inspire the desk anthropology of the Président de Brosses, who was the first to use the term 'fetishism' in artistic discourse, in his *Du culte des dieux fétiches* (Geneva 1760). Ottaviano Guasco's *De l'usage des statues chez les anciens*, published eight years later in Brussels, was even more radical than Lemée and De Brosses in that he suggested that there is no fundamental difference between the fetishism of pagan tribes in Africa and the adoration of classical sculpture by European art lovers.[13] Inspired by Montesquieu's *Considérations sur la grandeur et la décadence des Romains* he analysed the role of statuary in Egyptian, Greek, and Roman society. This intellectual lineage would culminate in Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy's *Jupiter Olympien* (Paris 1815), which was the first history of Greek sculpture from its cult origins to its inclusion in art exhibitions to take into account both Winckelmann's formal analysis of the development of Greek sculpture and the anthropological inquiries into its religious and political roles by De Brosses and Guasco.[14] Quatremère was even more outspoken than his predecessors in stressing the religious origins of the art, calling it 'the most faithful servant of religion', and presenting its development from its earliest attempts to create human likeness to the sophisticated idealized naturalism of Praxiteles as motivated to a large degree by the political use of art by priests and rulers to create persuasive images of the gods.[15]

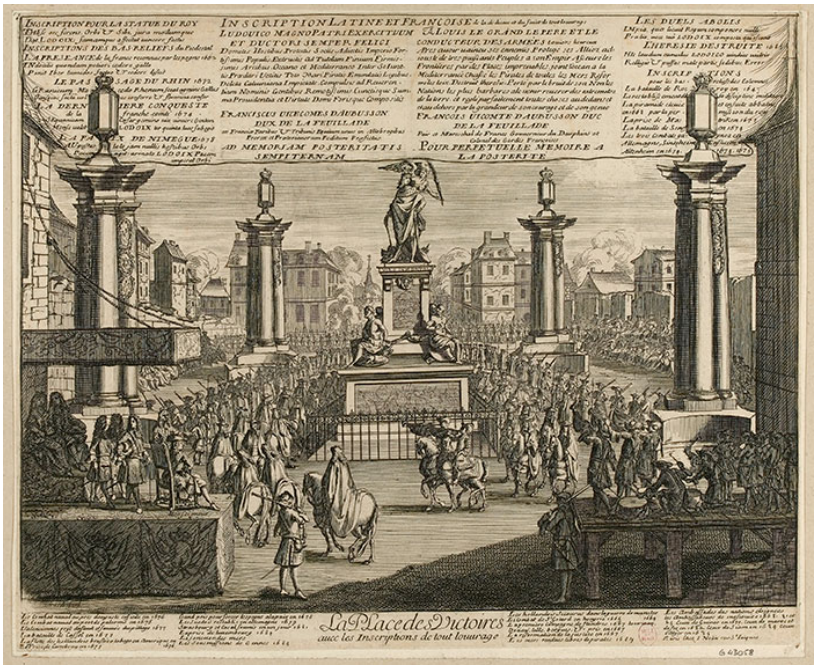

Figure 3.8 Anonymous engraver after Nicolas Guérard (*c.* 1648–1719), *Inauguration de la statue de Louis XIV sur la Place des Victoires le 28 mars 1686,* 1686, Paris: Musée Carnavalet.

These studies did not consider sculpture primarily as a fine art, did not analyse its artistic or aesthetic merit, but looked at the religious or political agency of statues. In a move that is typical of Enlightenment thought they all attempted to think through the nature of sculpture by investigating—or reconstructing—its origins, just as Rousseau had attempted to understand the predicament of oppressed nations by constructing an ideal noble savage, and Laugier had constructed, behind his desk, the origins of architecture in the primitive hut.[16] They all argued that the origin of sculpture is religious: statues were to be adored as images of the gods or as the gods themselves they represented, not for their artistic qualities; and they all argued that the origin of sculpture is intimately linked to the birth of society. Unlike Winckelmann they did not concentrate on Greek classical sculpture, but instead operated in a global, ethnographic

perspective. Their ambition was not to write the history of sculpture for its aesthetic merit, nor to present it as the artistic norm for contemporary artists, but to understand its role in society.

It is clear from Stefano Borgia's correspondence and from the writings by his close collaborators such as the Danish Egyptologist Georg Zoëga, that the intellectual climate in which the Borgia collection was formed was very much inspired by the ideas of De Brosses and Guasco. It constituted the rudiments of a global history of humanity, extending the foundations laid by Winckelmann by drawing into consideration works from the Americas, Africa, or Asia.[17] Quatremère de Quincy visited the museum several times, as did Goethe, Herder, and many others.[18] The collection started from the much smaller antiquarian collection put together by his uncle, but increased immensely through Borgia's strategy of asking missionaries from all over the world, through his connections with the Propaganda Fide, to bring back religious artefacts, manuscripts pertaining to the history of Christianity and other religions, languages, and culture. It included for instance very important early Coptic manuscripts, an extremely rare Mexican document relating the history of the proto-Hispanic civilizations, and very early images of the Chinese wall. Borgia replied to his detractors who accused him of an unhealthy interest in idols and daemons, that he did not collect religious objects out of idolatry, or to document the superiority of the Catholic faith, but out of a true universalist interest in the religions and cultures of all human beings, in a vein that was clearly inspired by Montesquieu. From the detailed account by the French antiquarian and art historian Antoine-Louis Millin we know that it consisted not just of artefacts from the Mediterranean world—Etruscan, Roman, and Greek, and a very substantial Egyptian department, but also included Indian, Chinese, and Scandinavian sections.[19] The Roman section very much recalls the kind of assemblages Piranesi made in the *Vasi e Candelabri*: objects in bronze, lead, marble, and terracotta; statuettes, furniture, and lamps. Like his famous Renaissance predecessor Inghirami, Borgia collected practical utensils like weights and measures, but with an important difference:

Inghirami wanted to reassemble anything that might help to understand Vitruvius and thus understand Roman architecture, whereas Borgia was inspired by an Enlightened interest in what we would now call global human culture and religion.[20]

Stefano Borgia was not unique among the Catholic establishment at the Vatican in this attitude. There was an intense interest in the cult objects brought back from Captain Cook's expeditions to the Pacific. The various accounts of these travels were translated into Italian as early as 1771, plays and operas were written about them, and many objects brought back by participants such as Georg Foster entered into Florentine and Roman collections. In the Borgia archive an account of Cook's expeditions and their interest for the culture of the Pacific survives, made for Pope Clement XIV and sent by him to the collector.[21]

After Stefano's death the collection was dispersed, with part of it ending up in the Propaganda Fide, together with the collection of Kircher, where it became, like the Museo Borgiano, part of the Vatican Museo Missionario Etnografico in the twentieth century. Another part was bought by Joachim Bonaparte, and left to the Museo Borbonico in Naples, where it was divided over its successors, the Museo di Capodimonte and the Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Only since the 1980s have scholars started to give it the attention this earliest museum of world ethnography deserves. Here I want to single out one surviving piece (Figure 3.9):

La Idolatria de los Indios de Nacion Aruacos, que habitã en las Sierras de S. Martha, destruida
por un Religioso Del Orden de S. Augustin de la Prouincia de Lima, y la q de 21.
con dies Templos, enque daban abominables cultos al Demonio.

Figure 3.9 Anonymous artist, Woodcut showing a Columbian sacrificial scene, from Francisco Romero, *Llanto sagrado de la America Meridional*, Milan, 1693.

a woodcut from the extremely rare 1693 edition of Francisco Romero's *Llanto sagrado de la America Meridional* showing a Columbian sacrificial scene in which masks, statuettes of totemic animals, and other cult statues are depicted, with the caption presenting this as an image of idolatry. In the Museo Borgiano no

such labelling took place. The statuettes depicted, and their Catholic denunciation in the woodcut, are both presented in the Museo Borgiano as documents in a world history of material religion and religious practice.[22]

The Museo Borgiano, visited by artists such as Goethe, art historians, and antiquarians like Antoine-Louis Millin, Luigi Lanzi, or Quatremère de Quincy, and prominent British collectors such as Richard Worseley, Hope, or Hamilton, thus became a hub, for a brief period, of connectivity. Here artefacts from all over the world were displayed together. It was the result of Borgia's ambition to produce a world history of religious practice, just as Thomas Hope was obsessed by the ambition to write a world history of art, an ambition he shared with another prominent visitor, Dominique-Vivant Denon, who went to Egypt with Napoleon and became the first Director of the Louvre.[23] There were other, equally suggestive connections: Borgia for instance employed the same restorers, Bartolommeo Cavaceppi, and Domenico Cardelli, that were employed in the Museo Pio-Clementino and by Piranesi. With Piranesi and Hamilton Borgia shared an interest in the connections between natural and art history. To write the full history of this collection and how it functioned as a centre for Enlightened interest in global material culture would require a different book. But this brief excursion to Velletri shows something of the context in which Piranesi created the etchings in the *Vasi*, as well as many of the objects depicted in them.

This excursion also tells us something about where Piranesi could have encountered these artefacts. But their inclusion in the *Vasi e Candelabri* also shows something more important: they suggest that for Piranesi, the material culture of the Etruscans, Greeks, and Romans did not take up a fundamentally different, and above all aesthetically different position, from the artefacts produced outside the nexus Egypt–Greece–Rome, which had been considered for so long as the chronological backbone of Western culture and religious history. Here as so often elsewhere, Piranesi presents a visual argument against the position of Winckelmann. He rejects his aesthetic ideal of noble simplicity and quiet grandeur, but also the centrality of that nexus which

Winckelmann had constructed in his *History of the Art of Antiquity*, where a chain of connections, all revolving around the increasingly naturalist representation of nature, is built from Pharaonic Egypt to Hellenistic art. Also, Winckelmann's connections are played out in statues, not in the lamps, urns, vases or instruments of sacrifice that Piranesi represented. But the inclusion of these objects worked in two ways: external objects, coming from cultures outside the Egypt–Greece–Rome nexus make their entrance, are made familiar, and are assimilated into the material culture of the Graeco-Roman world. By implication, hitherto familiar objects from Greece, Rome, and Etruria are de-familiarized, because of the formal similarities and proximity that Piranesi suggests, and thereby put on the same level as these exotic, 'barbarian' or 'primitive' objects.

3.3 Plaster Cast Collections as Restoration Laboratories

In Piranesi's time, next to engravings, etchings and other kinds of reproductive engravings, the only way for most people to see ancient art was in plaster cast collections.[24] They were created by academies of art, in Paris, Madrid, or Amsterdam, to be used as training material, but also by collectors to act as a substitute, in fact a series of exemplifications, of the real, marble, or porphyry statues in Rome they could no longer visit. What makes them very interesting in our context, is that the casts in them were not only, or not always, casts made in Rome after Roman monuments, such as the casts made for Louis XIV of Trajan's column, which are copies that functioned as visual records of what the original looked like. These collections were also restoration laboratories, and in that sense one may call them material histories of the gaze, when they present series of successive restorations of one prototype.

The plaster cast made after antique fragments thus functions as the starting point of a recreation of the original whole. In this context the French royal plaster cast collection is even more telling, because it shows successive restorations of one particular statue. Started by François I, it was substantially amplified under

Louis XIV, who had the plasters located in the Salle des Antiques and near the apartments of the Académie Royale in the Cour Carrée of the Louvre. It is now located in the former royal stables by Jules Hardouin-Mansart in Versailles, where the plaster cast collections of the Louvre, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and the royal collections are reunited and gradually restored after the neglect and abuse they suffered, like so many plaster cast collections, during the 1960s and 1970s (Figure 3.10). It is a spectacular collection of more than 5000 pieces, with very large, life-size casts of the orders of the Parthenon or the Temple of Castor and Pollux in Rome, a set of casts of the Pergamon altar, but also series of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century casts made after the same statue, such as the Wounded Amazon (Figure 3.11), the Dying Gaul, which was the model for the bronze cast of the Dying Gaul made in 1688 now in Fontainebleau, or the Venus de Medici. They tell us much about the way these statues were seen at the time.

Figure 3.10 Versailles, Royal Stables built by Jules-Hardouin-Mansart (1646–1708) from 1679–82: Gypsothèque.

Figure 3.11 Versailles, Gypsothèque: series of casts made of the Wounded Amazon in the seventeenth century.

At the time of their creation, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the aim of their creators was not to exhibit the fragmentary process of the survival of antique art, but to deliver, in these plaster casts, copies that displayed the integrity of the original its pristine state, so that, as François I put it, 'Italy would be transported' to France. One might also call these collections attempts at creating a tangible cultural memory, displaying a material coherence, that would appear to be invulnerable to the ravages of time.

Piranesi and the restorers or collectors he worked for were familiar with the techniques of plaster casting, and with the existence of vast collections of them.[25] The paper museum of the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi* can thus be related to the plaster cast tradition in that many of the restored objects included in this publication were probably made with the help of cast models. Yet at the same time the nature and purport of the *Vasi* is different, in two important respects: first, because it aims not at showing Graeco-Roman artefacts in their pristine wholeness, but at documenting their appearance as they were excavated, as well as Piranesi's attempts at transforming them into new objects. They are *poëtic restaurations*, to use Pascal Griener's phrase, that reveal the full creative potential dormant in them. Second, because his choice of objects is radically different. Gone are the highlights of Greek and Roman sculpture; instead we find chairs, vases, urns, fragments of architectural sculpture, and lamps, chosen from the early Empire or period of Hadrian, considered generally by the end of the eighteenth century as a period of decline; and often decorated with very conspicuous exotic, grotesque, barbaric, or animal forms. In particular, the inclusion of lamps and reliefs from two rather particular collections, the museum of the Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher and that of the Cardinal Stefano Borgia, both connected with the Propaganda Fide, the Vatican's missionary department, should make us pause.

3.4 Restoration

All of Piranesi's work is defined by a conscious and sustained effort to make present stone remains of the past through the visual means and the pictorial strategies that he developed in the course of his life. In his early works, the *Prima Parte di Architettura e Prospettive* (1743), or the *Antichità Romane de'tempi della Repubblica e de'primi Imperatori* (1748), he presents a combination of etchings showing the ruins at the moment he saw them, subject to the ravages of time, together with hybrid images that assemble an abrupt montage of their present state with elements that had disappeared by the

eighteenth century, and additions imagined by the artist, as in the scenes from the Via Appia (Figure 3.12).

Figure 3.12 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Via Appia* from the *AntichitàRomane*, 1748.

A comparison for instance between the way in which Piranesi visually stages the Pantheon (Figures 3.13a and b) and the manner preserved by more traditional *vedutisti* or Renaissance architectural historians and theorists, shows how much the importance of suggesting that the building is actually present in front of the viewer's eyes, replaced the documentary tradition that started with the *Speculum Magnificentiae Romae* at the end of the sixteenth century. Whereas there, or in the collections of Roman antiquities by Palladio and Serlio, the Pantheon is shown frontally, in orthogonal projection, and with the ambition to adhere to its exact state at the time, Piranesi's version as presented in the *Magnificenze* uses a complex perspectival system with two vanishing points located so as not to imply a conventional or self-evident view. He also removed several columns from the portico to enable the suggestion that the viewer is inside it. He thus avoids, too, any suggestion of viewing

distance between the building and the viewer, and highlights the Pantheon's heavy materiality by the very blackness of the etching. This particularity of Piranesi's art has often been noted, by Goethe, for one, whose observation on the immediate presence of the work of art that speaks to the senses applies equally well to Piranesi as to antique sculpture. It was also noted by Henri Focillon in his ground-breaking biography of the artist.

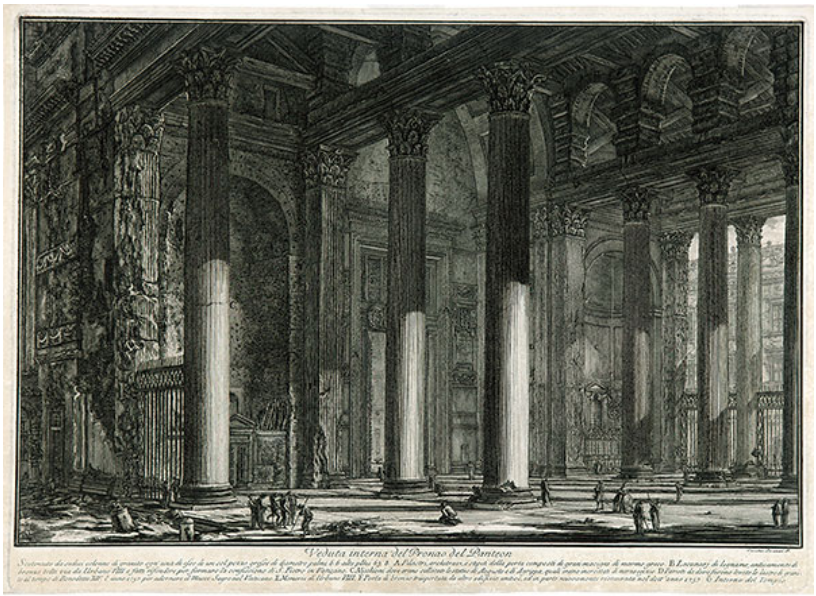

Figure 3.13a Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *View of the Interior of the Pronaos of the Pantheon* from the *Antichità Romane*, 1785.

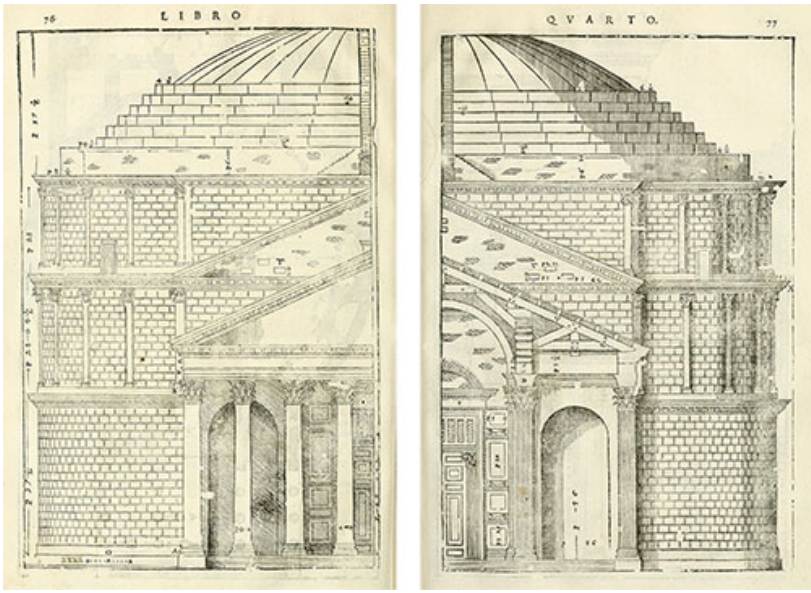

Figure 3.13b Andrea Palladio (1508–1580), *Pantheon* from *I Quattro libri dell'architettura,* fourth book, vol. II, pp. 76–7 (Venice: Bartolomeo Carampello, 1616).

In his Museo, however, he went beyond paper, and had actual stone objects made after his designs, that integrated fragments from Pantanello and Roman collections.[26] In the candelabra and other artefacts created there ancient fragments were subsumed into new objects that looked Roman, but were in fact very complex hybrids, including parts from Hadrian's Villa, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century restorations, and new sculpture. These late works can be defined even more as acts of restoration, but in a very particular sense.

Consider for instance the part of the moulding of the Louvre candelabrum shown in Chapter 1 (Figure 1.18): as we have seen, one part looks Roman, but is a fragment, and Piranesi's workshop has added the rest of the moulding, as the far less refined workmanship shows. But then something happens, which becomes clear when we compare again the Louvre candelabrum with authentic Roman specimens (Figures 2.6–2.9). He goes into what we might call a typical Piranesian design overdrive,

transforming the Hadrianic tripartite prototype into something much more varied and rich, if not excessive. Compared to the latters' clearly visible structure with its pedestal, shaft, and light-bearing disc, derived from acanthus and Corinthian forms, and quite sober and coherent iconography of gods and small erotes, his work presents a very riot of ornament, a profusion of elements taken from altars, the theatre, sarcophagi, furniture, not to forget his tendency to duplicate and reverse classical motifs. In his candelabra the lions' claws are not simply content to carry a pedestal, but enliven their performance of this task by sinking their teeth into their own claws. Something similar can be observed in other *opere romane* published in the *Vasi*: the boar-shaped rhyton for instance now in Stockholm, or the large tazza supported by fauns, or the one supported by leonine claws.

Nonetheless, and despite the fact that Piranesi was very well acquainted with the surviving Roman specimens in the Barberini and Papal collections, he was quite emphatic about their provenance and authenticity. For instance, he described the Pelican candelabrum as a 'pezzo singolare di antiquità' in the caption of plate 25 of the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi*. That is, he repeatedly claimed in the *Vasi* that he did not merely restore these ancient objects, but reconstructed them entirely in the Roman manner. Contemporaries, such as the British collector Jenkins, repeated these claims: 'The Cavalier of the Candelabri […] amongst the other things has Composed a Monument for himself—his third Candelabri [sic] is completed, the which he sais, was found *tale quale* as well as the other two in Adrians Villa'.[27] But on the basis of nineteenth-century connoisseurship and recent material and technical investigation, it has become undisputable that the artefacts made there did not at all emerge *tale quale* from the swamp at Pantanelleo. Most of them, when investigated, turn out to consist to a considerable degree of much more recent, sixteeenth- and eighteenth-century materials. That conclusion is borne out by the conspicuous differences in sculpture styles.

As Seymour Howard, the authority on eighteenth-century sculpture restoration, once observed, restoration is as old as humanity itself, and can already be observed in the cave

paintings of Lascaux or Chauvet.[28] It is rarely simply a matter of conserving or repairing, or bringing back an artefact to its pristine state, but almost always an act of appropriation by the restorer as well. Fragments from Pantanello, Tusculum, or Roman collections such as the Barberini or the Salviatialla Lungara were completed, like the moulding in the Louvre candelabrum, but the process only started here. These fragments are then appropriated to create, or rather, in Piranesi's view, recreate the splendours of Roman, Greek, Etruscan, and Egyptian art, in new compositions that disobey the restraint of Vitruvian decorum, and instead aim at maximum richness, variety, delicacy, and opulence. So from reparation and simple restoration we move here to appropriation, to end with a recreation, in what Piranesi conceived to be an entirely historical manner, of what he considered the best elements of Mediterranean material culture. As we saw in the previous chapter, he considered the integration of antique fragments into modern work and the claim that the result was antique, as perfectly justified. This was exemplified in the symmetrical display in his Museo, where the modern framed and thus incorporated the ancient in a new coherent whole.[29]

3.4.1 Eighteenth-Century Concepts of Restoration

Now this is a very different view of restoration from the one put forth for instance by Bartolommeo Cavaceppi, Giovanni Casanova, the brother of Giacomo, who taught at the Dresden Academy of Fine Art, or the philologist Carl Gustav Heyne, who all wrote about the principles of restoration.[30] They all stress the importance of limiting the addition of new elements to one third at the most, the ambition or ideal to somehow come to understand the original in its pristine state, and the primacy of that original. Cavaceppi for instance instructs restorers to adapt their materials, technique, and proficiency to that of the statue to be restored, to introduce modern additions gradually, and respect the irregularities of the original. He also, interestingly, connects the restoration of ancient sculpture with the rebirth of the arts, since sculpture is the only surviving art form from ancient Greece

and Rome.[31] But in reality Cavaceppi, when restoring the Barberini Candelabra, moved around parts, and joined together two triangular bases, adding large ribbed bowls, and completed them with modern parts. The result is defined by present-day scholars not as a restoration, but rather as a skillful *pastiche*.[32]

In the decades after Piranesi's death we find some restoration accounts by patrons and of visits to the studios of Cavaceppi and other sculptors/restorers that are quite explicit about their very interventionist actual practice. The German-Danish author Friederike Brun (1765–1835) for instance toured the studios extensively in 1795, 1802, and 1807, in the company of the art historian Alois Hirt (1759–1836) and the Egyptologist Georg Zoëga (1755–1809), and described Carlo Albacini's workplace as a 'factory of antiques', noting the large supply of arms, legs, hands, and torsos, from all periods and styles. She pursues:

> There the scattered marble bones are called together for a kind of prehistoric Resurrection, and put together, God knows how, so that the head of a man is made to fit the torso of his mortal enemy …. Next we see the results in the cabinets of connoisseurs.[33]

Piranesi's work shows a similar tension between what he did and what he claimed. Although he professed, as we have seen, in the captions of the *Vasi* that he had merely repaired original Roman works, in fact he completely transformed them and integrated them into his vision of what the revival of Roman art should look like. This contradiction between the professed ideal of a return to an original coherence, particularly in Cavaceppi's text on restoration, and the practice of combining very heterogeneous elements, points in my view to a very important implicit concern, which could not, for obvious reasons, be stated explicitly by restorers: that the restorations that took place at Piranesi's Museo were not driven by the desire to return the object to its original state. Instead, their practice, putting together parts of different objects to create what is in fact an eighteenth-century view of what a Roman artefact might have looked like, is driven by a desire to restore a stylistic coherence that is informed as much by the actual excavations as by the preferences and ambitions of the restorers to bring about what they considered to be the full

potential of the original, and thus to bring back a hypothetical original stylistic coherence.[34]

3.4.2 Psychological Aspects of Restoration

This observation brings us to another aspect of restoration: its psychological motives. The so-called restorations or repairs undertaken in Piranesi's Museo, like the practices of Cavaceppi, Franzoni, and his colleagues working for the Museo Pio-Clementino, are driven in my view by a desire to reach, to use the terms coined by Jan Assmann, and reinstate, a new coherence.[35] But in this case the coherence strived for was not a ritual or religious one, but rather a material, artistic or aesthetic one.

In 1810 Wilhelm von Humboldt, the Prussian ambassador to the Vatican, had to leave Rome to return to his native Berlin and to his family manor at Tegel. He asked Gérando, at the time in charge of Papal antiquities for permission to take with him a classical relief, the so-called 'Parzen-Rilievo'. Here the presence which an artefact could evoke was actively sought, and the relief almost became a talisman. As Humboldt put it: 'Si vous concevez, comme certainement vous le devez, de quelle consolation est un pareil souvenir dans un pays où l'on est absolument séparé de l'antiquité…'.[36] With Humboldt and his wife Caroline things went much further than such transportation of Roman fragments, which we might simply consider as a variety of souvenir collecting. As Pascal Griener has shown recently, they had slices carved out of fragments of the Obelisco Sallustiano, which had been standing at the top of the Spanish Steps, to integrate them into new, classicizing coffee tables for their country house at Tegel near Berlin, thus integrating actual Roman fragments into new, neoclassical furniture.

Their interventions did not stop here. They also had acquisitions transformed by the German sculptor Hans Christian Rauch into newly created antiquities. In the case of the Calixtus Well (Figure 3.14), so called because Pope Calixtus was drowned in it in 322 AD, they were able to purchase the remaining

fragments since the Vatican did not want them because of the martyrdom of Pope Calixtus. Caroline von Humboldt decided, against the advice of her husband and many archeologists, who begged her to leave the fragments as they were, to have it substantially restored. She had, as Pascal Griener puts it, and like Piranesi, a very *poëtical* view of restoring:

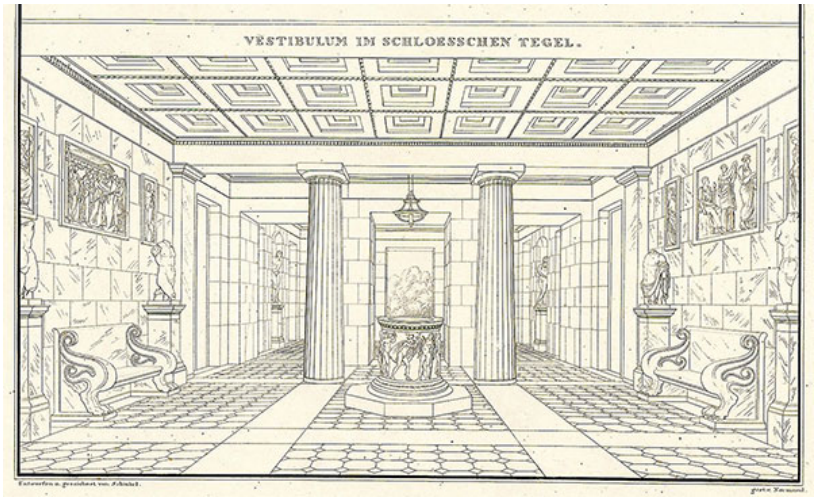

Figure 3.14 Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841), Atrium of Schloss Tegel, showing the Calixtus Well, from *Sammlung architektonischer Entwürfe*, Berlin: Ernst & Korn, 1824, vol. 4, ill. 26.

> She felt that ancient sculpture should be subjected to the most modern techniques of creation, because she believed that a great continuity connected antique sculpture and the neo-classical creators of her day; and she had very generous ideas regarding the plasticity of an antique, and how it should be handled or appropriated by its owner.[37]

What Rauch did, on the advice of Thorvaldsen, was to make a plaster cast, complete all the lacunae on that cast, and to use this new, 'restored' original, as the starting point of the restoration of the fragments, or rather, re-use of them, almost like an intaglio, in a new Calixtus Well. This way of proceeding sounds very much

like how Piranesi may have worked when creating his candelabra, and this hypothesis may be confirmed by Frederike Brun's account quoted above.

As with Piranesi and his candelabra, there is no indication that Caroline von Humboldt or Hans Christian Rauch felt they were creating fakes or frauds, or even imitations or pastiches. What they did was make sure that the statues returned to their original state, or, one might say, reached their full potential. As Griener put it, 'Restoration is thus understood as a recreation; what is imitated is not antique sculpture, but the creative power of an antique sculptor.'[38] In his own work Canova would follow a similar method, making first a plaster cast, sometimes based on *moulage à vif*, as in the case of Pauline Borghese, and carving the final marble work using not the sitter, but this cast as the model.

But perhaps the most telling case is that of Caroline von Humboldt's intervention in an antique herm. In 1803 their son Wilhelm died in Rome. In the same year the bereaved mother bought a classical sculpture, which she had transformed by the German sculptor Daniel Christian Rauch into a statue of Bacchus, the god of life's renewal, which was destroyed during the Second World War. But she added the request that the head of the god should become that of her dead son.[39] There is also the case of the British artist and collector Adam Buck (1759–1833). In his portrait of himself, his family and his collection, he included a herm whose head was replaced by that of his dead infant son (Figure 3.15).[40]

Figure 3.15 Adam Buck (1759–1833), *Self-Portrait of the Artist and his Family*, 1813, watercolour, 44.6 × 42.4 cm, New Haven: Yale Centre for British Art.

Such behaviour may seem very strange to us, for psychological as well as for archaeological or artistic reasons. There is a paradox at work here: precisely by appropriating the fragment and inserting it into a new work, antiquity can be restored and made present again. We may account for it, as Pascal Griener has argued, by pointing at the hermeneutical conundrum that was formulated by many late eighteenth-century enlightened critics of religion as well as by German philosophers of art: Greek sculpture had evolved as part of pagan religion, and was extolled by many as the most beautiful results of paganism, because it

provided pagan worshippers with visible idols fit to be worshipped.[41] At the same time, and by that very token, these statues had become to viewers of the late eighteenth century the material remains of a dead past; and their beauty and agency as pagan idols could now only be understood precisely by placing oneself *outside* antique paganism. Hence they could only be understood as fragments of a religion and society long gone, but precisely because of this fragmented nature they demanded—or needed—a great effort of imagination. As the German philosopher of art Karl Philipp Moritz put it: 'We are very well capable of existing without the contemplation of beautiful works of art, but these, as such, cannot exist without our looking at them.'[42]

One way in which this imaginative, hermeneutical effort manifested itself was the brief vogue, from 1770 to 1820, to incorporate, appropriate, and transform ancient fragments into new artefacts that would both keep intact their origins and ancient aura, but also give them a new lease of life in a new context. As the behaviour of the Humboldts or Adam Buck suggests, there is also a change in mentality that sets such use of fragments apart from the much older tradition of incorporating Roman fragments into medieval of early modern façades. The fragment acquires a new appreciation. Starting in the work of Robert Adam in the 1750s, architects start to use them as direct sources for their own designs. The work of Henry Holland to remodel Carlton House for instance was directly nourished by the fragments collected for him in Rome in the 1790s by Charles Heathcote Tatham. Once arrived in London many of these fragments would be bought by Sir John Soane and are still on display in the Soane Museum. But they also served as the material for Tatham's own, highly influential publication *Etchings representing the best examples of ancient architectural Ornament*, of 1799–1800, one of the major, if not the main, publication shaping Regency neoclassicism in Britain and its colonies.[43]

Hence the tendency, not to say frenzy, from Sir John Soane's Museum in London to Schloß Tegel near Berlin, to acquire as many antique fragments as possible and incorporate them into new artefacts. Hence also Piranesi's drive to unearth rubble from

the swamp at Pantanello, and reuse the fragments that recalled the religious Roman rituals of the Romans into new Graeco-Roman Imperial artefacts. But this urge to make absent antiquity present again through an appropriation of its material remains would be driven out by the representational devices of the new museums and art galleries, who would also attempt to make antiquity present, but once removed, and put at a distance in a showcase.

Piranesi's Candelabra and the Presence of the Past: Excessive Objects and the Emergence of a Style in the Age of Neoclassicism. Caroline van Eck, Oxford University Press. © Caroline van Eck 2023. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192845665.003.0004

[1] Townley papers, quoted in Vaughan 2015: 289.

[2] See most recently Panza 2013: 63–4, with bibliography and Miller 2003.

[3] But see the studies of candelabra in Bosso 2005, 2016.

[4] On *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi* see most recently Hyde Minor 2015, with bibliography; Vaughan 2015; Höper, Stoschek, and Heinlein 1999: 232–53, gives a succinct but complete overview of the artefacts depicted, their provenance, ownership, and *fortuna*, the dedicatees of the plates; and an analysis of the captions.

[5] On acanthus lore see Rykwert 1996: 316–50.

[6] Piranesi 1778, Plate 2: 'I suoi intagli, che si veggono in questo Sepolcro, sono allusive alle Ceremonie usate dalli Romani ne i loro Funerali. Lo Scultore si è sforzato d'assomigliar l'arte alla natura, la quale è stata imitata, come si vede nella general forma di essi intagli'. Cf. Miller 2003: 134.

[7] Bailey 1996: Plate 15, nrs Q 3579 and 3580; Plate 24, nrs 3611 and 3612; Plate 183, Q 3593; Plate 184, Q 3564.

[8] On these zoomorphic vessels see Ebbinghaus 2018: 59, 135–48, 170–78, and 194–99.

[9] On changing notions of authenticity where classical antiquities are concerned see Part One of Jones 1990, the survey of recent scholarship in the Introduction of Higbie 2017: 1–21; as well as her discussion of Greek

and Roman attitudes towards copies, fakes, and misattributions on pp. 79–132. For ancient views on authenticity and imitation see also Gazda 2002, and the review by Hallett 2005.

10 Santi Bartoli and Bellori 1691: part II, plate 19 and part III, plate 18.

11 On the Museo Borgiano see Borson 1796; Heeren 1820; Pierre-Adrien Pâris, *Antichità egizie a Velletri*, a drawing of c. 1783 now in Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, offers a snapshot of the Egyptian collection. See the catalogues of this collection in Colini 1886: 275–427. For recent studies see Griener 1990: 166–7, with many references to primary contemporary sources; Nocca 2001a, 2001b; Ceccarelli 2013; Aigner and Miotk 2013: 357–416.

12 Lemée 2011; on Lemée and his eighteenth-century followers see Van Eck 2013.

13 On Guasco see Griener 2007: pp. 25–54; and Ferrari 2015.

14 On Quatremère's book on the statue of Jupiter in Olympia little has been done, but see Knipping 2001 and Van Eck 2016: 80–116.

15 Quatremère de Quincy 1814: xxiii: '[l'art de la sculpture] fut l'art favori de la religion et le ministre le plus docile de ses volontés'.

16 On the varieties of primitivism in eighteenth-century thought see De Jong 2014: 173–229, with bibliography.

17 Cardinali 1806: 34: 'Mentre il sublime Winkelmann, assoggettava gli avanzi della più rimota antichità alle profonde meditazioni della filosofia, e nel clima, nelle religioni, nel governo, ne costumi, e nelle osservanze popolari ricercava le cause dell'ingrandimento, o della decadenza delle arti, Stefano con una maravigliosa attività ne raccoglieva dai confini dell'egitto, del settentrione, della cina, e del malabarre i monumenti, e porge va ai dotti inesauribil tesoro di fatti, e di materiali preziosi, co'quali inalzar si potesse il superbo edificio, di cui il solo disegno rese immortale presso tutta l'europa quel famoso brandeburgense.'

18 Nocca 2012: 202–14.

19 Millin 1807.

20 On Inghirami's interest in Roman weights and measures see Rowland 2001: 109–41 and 151–7.

21 Cf. Bassani 1982, and Giglioli 1893: 173–43, and 1895: 57–144. On the account made for Pope Clement XIV see Bassani, p. 25. On the Continental dispersal of Pacific artefacts collected by Cook and Forster see Kaeppler 1978.

22 Ceccarelli 2013: 323, figs 7 and 8.

23 Vivant-Denon 1829; cf. also Gallo 2001.

[24] See Frederiksen and Marchand 2010; Martinez 2009: 1127–52; on collections of architectural casts see Lending 2017.

[25] Howard 2003.

[26] See Miller 2003. Although it is not clear when he started collecting, Piranesi mentions his collection of antique finds in the *Ragionamento Apologetico* in the *Diverse Maniere*, in Wilton-Ely 2002: 35.

[27] Bignamini and Hornsby 2004: vol. II, p. 8.

[28] Howard 2003: 25–45. See also Conti 1973; Dolcini 1986; Pinelli 1986; Ramage 1999, 2002, 2003.

[29] Cf. Piranesi, caption for plate 89a in the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi*, depicting a tripod and for Edward Walter, quoted in the previous chapter, note 43.

[30] Casanova 1770: v; Heyne 1778–1779: 172–258; De Rossi 1826: 23–38; Cavaceppi 1768–1772. See also Miller 2003: 155–67.

[31] Cavaceppi 1768–1772: [Introduction], no page numbers.

[32] Cf. Cassidy 1990 and De Franceschini 2017: 144–63, who includes a drawing by Jenkins documenting the state of these Candelabra before restoration.

[33] Brun 1833, vol. II: 15–17. See also Müller 2003.

[34] On Cavaceppi's approach to restoration, and the contrast between what Cavaceppi wrote and what he did, see Coltman 2009: 84–6; Grossman, Podany, and True 2013, in that volume the article by Piva 2013: 5–20; Ramage 1999; Vaughan 2015.

[35] Assmann 1997 [1992]. See also, for a more detailed analysis of the *Style Empire* as an attempt to achieve Assmannian coherence Van Eck and Versluys 2017.

[36] Wilhelm von Humboldt 1907. Quoted by Griener 1990: 176. On the persistence of magical and talismanic thinking in Prussia and Weimar around 1800 see Weder 2007, and Böhmer 2012.

[37] Griener 2017.

[38] Griener 2017: 176.

[39] 'Bei Franzoni ist ein sehr schöner Bacchus, an dem Leib, und ein halber Schenkel, das andere Bein beinahe bis zum Schiebein ganz, und aus sehr schönem Marmor himmlich gearbeitet.' Letter from Caroline to Wilhelm, Rome, 25 January 1809, reprinted in Sydow 1906–1916: vol. III, n° 37, p. 78. On the practice of replacing heads of classical statues see Grassinger 2009: 179–91. On the Humboldt case see also Griener 2017.

[40] Baskett 2007, 2015.

[41] Griener 2017: 162–5.

[42] Moritz 1962: 4.
[43] Salmon and Pearce 2005, in particular pp. 1 and 7.

4

Animal Features

Piranesi's candelabra are part of the major works of the last fifteen years of his life. They were created in the same years as he worked on Santa Maria del Priorato (Figure 4.1a and b) and to design its ornament he went back to his earlier investigations of the material culture of Roman religion, first published in the *Antichità Romane* (Figure 4.2) of 1756, the *Camere sepolcrali* of the same year, and the even earlier *Trofei di Ottaviano Augusto* (Figure 4.3) of 1752. In the final decade he published three major and very different works: his polemic against Mariette, the *Diverse Maniere* (Figure 4.4), and *Vasi e Candelabri*; excavated the mass of fragments from the swamp at Pantanello, and made many objects out of them: vases, tripods, chairs, and lamps. The close connection between recording the remains of Rome, the project of Santa Maria del Priorato, the *Diverse Maniere*, and the design of *piccola architettura* such as chairs, tables, or candelabra, is also documented by the sketches now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, which show for instance how he thought at the same time about candelabra and chimney pieces, and tried to integrate them into one design.

Figure 4.1a Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Façade of Santa Maria del Priorato, 1764–66, Rome.

Figure 4.1b Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Façade of Santa Maria del Priorato (detail of snake element), 1764–66, Rome.

Figure 4.2 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Frontispiece to Volume II of *Le Antichità Romane*, Paris 1800–1809, 400 × 258 mm.

Figure 4.3 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Trofeo di Ottaviano Augusto* from *Antichità d'Albano e di Castel Gandolfo and Trofei di Ottaviano Augusto*, Paris 1800–1809, 600 × 400 mm.

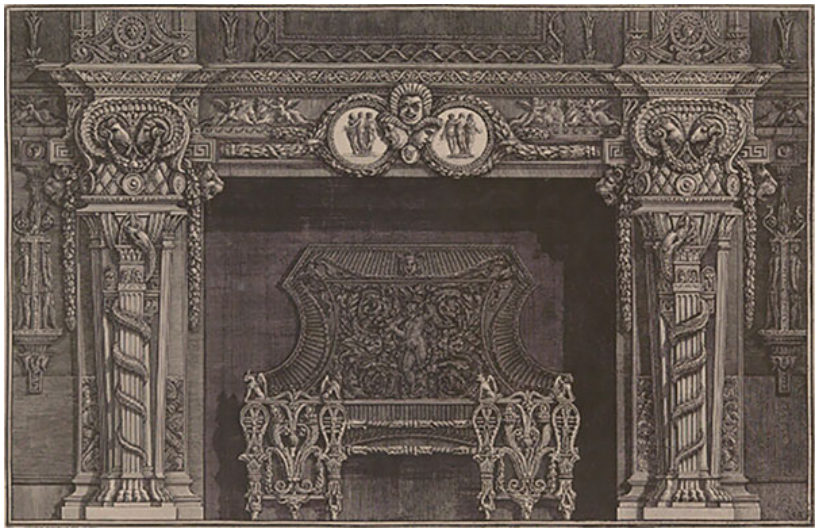

Figure 4.4 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Camino con fregio decorato da due cammei con le tre grazie* from *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini ed ogni altra parte degli edifizi desunte dall'architettura egizia, etrusca e greca*, Rome [ca. 1769], 240 × 375 mm.

The works resulting from this burst of creativity and sheer hard work are very heterogeneous: the design of a religious complex in a highly overdetermined locus of Roman and pre-Roman religious practice, nourished by his earlier interest in cult objects, especially those functioning in funeral rites; luxury objects for a rich, sophisticated international group of clients; monumental, lavishly decorated chimney mantelpieces, and those strange, tall candelabra that are the subject of this book. They all integrate, in various ways, Roman, Egyptian, and Etruscan material culture, but also, particularly in the lamps, the very old, the exotic, and the non-human, in the shape of strange animals or hybrids that Piranesi invented by combining Egyptian, Greek, and Roman mythological beasts. And they all share a strong presence of animal features, from the snakes slithering in and out of the ornament in the façade and interior of Santa Maria del Priorato to the profusion of animals real and mythological in the chimney mantelpieces, and the functional parts of chairs, vases, and lamps

transformed into rams' legs, wolves, snakes, or gazelles in the *Vasi*. The candelabra include prominent elephants, birds, dolphins, and rams' heads, to name but some animal features.

There are several connections between these works of art and the polemical position he also developed in these years: the origins of classical art and architecture, he argued, are not Greek but Egyptian, Etruscan, and Italic. The very wide geographical and chronological range of forms created in his final years corresponds to that position and is based on a concept of design that is equally all-encompassing. All these works were born as well from the incessant desire and ambition to somehow revive the material culture of the Imperial Roman world; so what role can the insistent and varied presence of animal features be said to play in this endeavour?

4.1 Animal Features in Piranesi's Late Works

These late works share the prominent, and often mysterious, presence of animals. In the candelabrum designed for his own grave, now in the Louvre, leonine heads and claws support birds of Stymphalos, who in their turn support rams' heads (Figure 1.9); in those in the Ashmolean, as we have seen, there are the hybrid birds, elephants, and sphinxes. Their number, vividness, and formal predominance are another feature that distinguishes them from their Roman ancestors. In the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi* wolves are prominent, as are dogs, lions, or sphinxes (Figure 4.5).

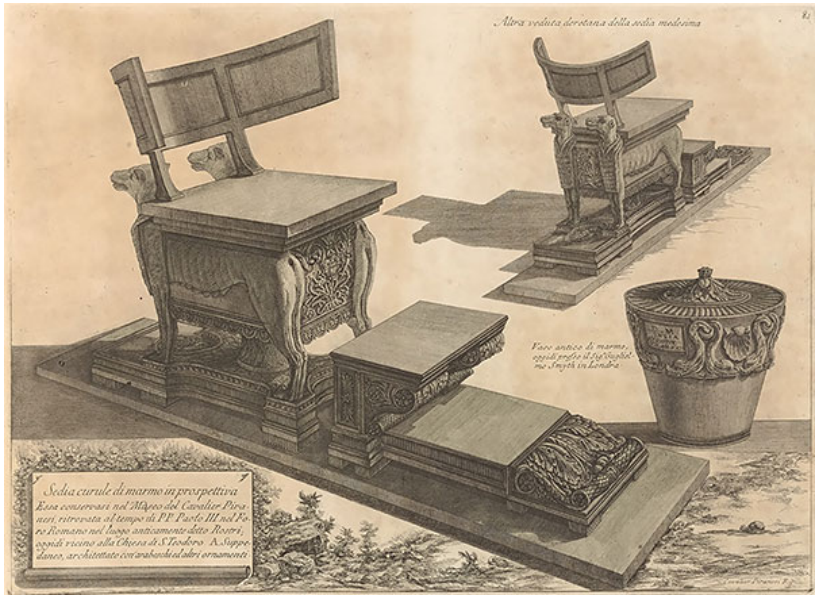

Figure 4.5 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Ceremonial Chair, from *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi,* vol. II, (Rome: 1778), Plate 81.

These animals recur constantly in his work: snakes for instance, from the early series of *Groteschi* (Figure 4.6), to the façade of Santa Maria del Priorato (Figure 4.1); sometimes integrated into Corinthian capitals. The frontispiece (Figure. 4.7) of the *Diverse Maniere* has four very prominent versions of the statue of Artemis as the Mistress of Wild Animals. In a typical case of Piranesian design overdrive the number of animal snouts attached to his rendering of a rostral column (Figure 4.8) has increased tenfold when compared with its model, the column of Caius Duilius (Figure 4.9). Animation is suggested in the ways in which animals are represented, but also in Piranesi's texts. The caption for the plate depicting the ceremonial chair carried by wolves in the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*, for instance, stated that 'The two wolves are trembling, as by the combined heaviness of the weight of the chair, and the persons they must support.'[1]

Figure 4.6 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Capriccio Grottesco*, 390 × 545 mm, Paris 1800–1809 [1748].

Figure 4.7 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Diverse Maniere d'Adornare I Cammini*…, Rome: Nella Stamperia di Generoso

Salomoni, 1769, frontispiece.

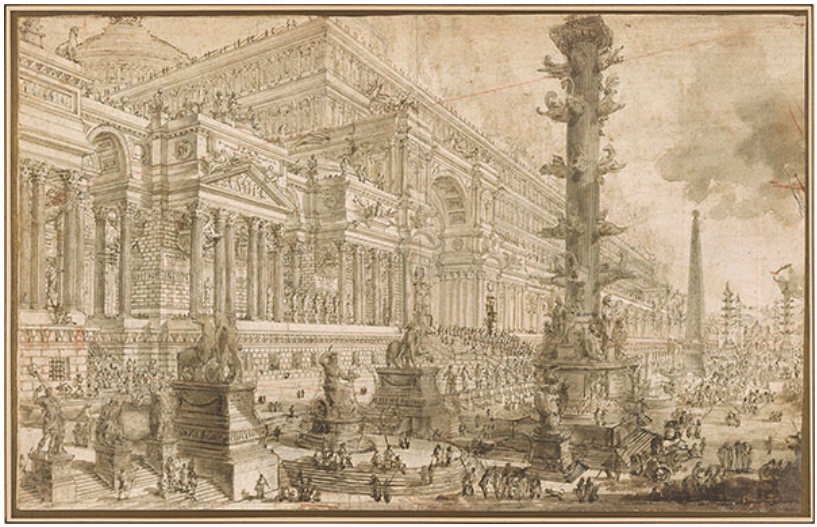

Figure 4.8 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Architectural Fantasy with a Colossal Arcaded Façade on a Piazza with Statues, Victory Columns, Fountains, and an Obelisk*, *c.* 1741–1742, pen and brown ink, with brown wash, over graphite, perspective lines and details in red chalk, on paper irregularly trimmed along lower edge, 270 × 428 mm.

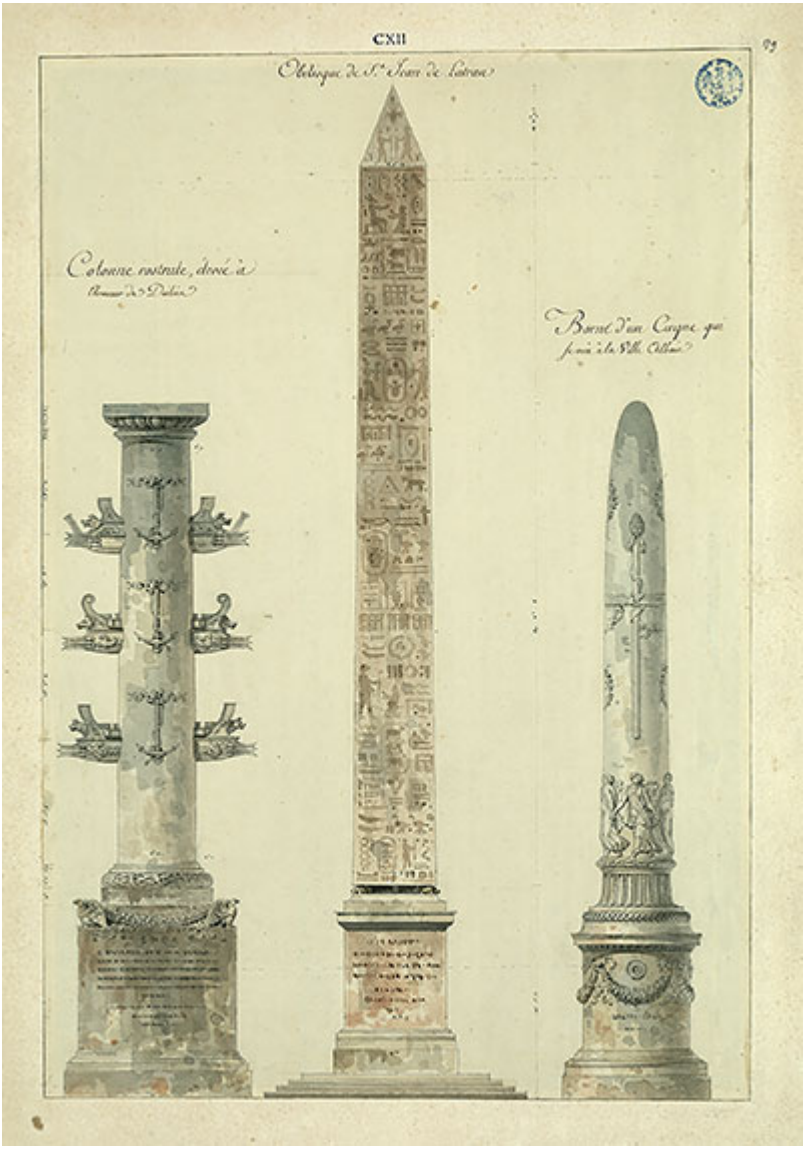

Figure 4.9 Pierre Adrien Pâris (1745–1819), *Colonne rostrale élevée à l'honneur de Duilius. Obélisque de Saint-Jean-de-Latran. Borne d'un cirque qui se voit à la ville Albain*, 1756–1819, pen, ink and various colours, Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon, Collection Pierre-Adrien-Pâris, Vol. 476, n°179, 477 × 306 mm.

The same interest in animal statuary is documented in the work of sculptors such as the *animalier* Franzoni, who specialized in sculpting animals, and was closely involved in the restoration of animal sculptures found in Tivoli for the Sala degli Animali in the Museo Pio-Clementino (Figure 4.20).[2] He was also involved in the fabrication of zoomorphic objects such as the Bacchus and Ceres Thrones (Figure 4.10) now in the Louvre, long considered to be an antique, but now believed to be an eighteenth-century *pasticcio*. Yet a brief glance at the animal statues displayed in the Sala degli Animali shows an important difference with the zoomorphism in Piranesi's work. Here most animals are real, existing animals. Many visitors noted that, with the exception of a few mythological animals, the room looked like the sixth day of Creation, with all the recently created animals waiting for God's commands.

Figure 4.10 Bacchus Throne, now dated eighteenth century and attributed to the sculptor F.A. Franzoni, with some Roman elements,

1.85 × 1.05 × 1 m, Paris, Louvre.

Figure 4.20 The Sala degli Animali, Museo Pio-Clementino (1775–1799), Vatican Museums.

In the artefacts made or inspired by Piranesi, mythological beasts, monsters, and *Mischwesen* dominate: sphinxes, griffins, hippogriffs, dragons, the birds of Lake Stymphalos, hybrid birds that are a cross between storks and pelicans. In contrast to most animal representations of the later eighteenth century, they lack heraldical meaning or usage; they do not refer to fables such as La Fontaine's, nor to the animal metamorphoses of Ovid. Instead the animal features of his candelabra, and in particular the Oxford and Louvre specimens, orchestrate in a rather abstruse manner their main function, which is to give light, and their main context, that of sacrifices and funerals with their attendant associations of the end of life and the transition to the afterlife. These large themes come together in the notion of eternal light. The candelabrum dedicated to Charles Morris for instance, reproduced in the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi* (Figure 4.11), and found in Pantanello according to Piranesi's caption, recalls sacrifice and burial in its main elements of parts taken from

Roman altars and the column. It features three hippogriffs, a round disc carried by turtles, sacrificial rams' heads, birds, baskets with fruits, acanthus, and ivy leaves. This suggests a representation of the cosmos, with the disc carried by turtles referring to the earth, and the birds suggesting the air; funeral associations because of the acanthus, and a reference to the cycle of life, death, and rebirth because of the Dionysian symbolism of the fruit basket and the ivy, as well as the sacrificial associations of the rams' heads.[3]

Veduta in prospettiva dell'
che si vede nel Museo
altro Candelabro antico
del Cavalier Piranesi
Al Signor Carlo Morris Cavaliere Inglese

Figure 4.11 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Veduta in prospettiva dell'altro Candelabro antico…: che si vede nel Museo del cavalier Piranesi…Al Signor Carlo Morris Cavaliere Inglese* from *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*…vol. II [Rome, 1770], etching, 700 × 353 mm.

The meaning of the Louvre candelabrum is explained in a caption by Piranesi for its etching in the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi.* Here he points out its funerary character, stressed by the Erotes with downturned, extinguished torches that originally flanked it when it was still on his tomb in Santa Maria del Priorato. This is combined with references to the four seasons of the year and the end of life. The fauns decorating the shaft, for instance, harvest pines, the last fruit of the year. As in the other candelabra, rams' heads and the leaves of acanthus and ivy suggest death and eternal life, sacrifice, and the passage from this life to the next.

The Oxford candelabra have a less obvious coherence of animal symbolism, but nevertheless some patterns can be detected. They stand out by the conspicuous presence of dolphins with twisted tails, elephants' heads, and hybrids between storks and pelicans, all carved in the exquisite manner reminiscent of Francesco Franzoni. Dolphins have a substantial presence in Greek and Roman mythology and visual culture. They are the companions of Amphion, Amphitrite, and Neptune, and are often depicted together with Erotes. Piranesi included an image of a statuette of the latter type in the *Vasi, Candelabri* (Figure 4.12). They were also considered as an image of the voyage of the soul across the Ocean to the Isle of the Blessed, and are frequently depicted on sarcophagi, a tradition that persisted into the fourth century CE. A sarcophagus excavated under Old St Peter's has four pairs of dolphins solemnly accompanying the soul on its journey to the afterlife.[4]

Al Signor Giovanni Corbet Cavaliere Inglese
amatore delle belle arti
In atto d' ossequio il Cavaliere Gio Batta Piranesi D.D.D.
Due Urne cinerarie. L'una N. ornata di roberchi, e Trofei, elegantemente scolpiti.
La sottoposta B. ornata di Genij, con ali dimesse, e sedenti in atto di mestizia, si vede-
no nel museo dell'autore. C. Due vedute di un Gruppo che abbraccia un Delfino dal quale
sembra esser condotto a diporto per il mare. Questo gruppo è nel Palazzo Farnese.

Figure 4.12 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Due Urne cinerarie* from *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*…vol. I [Rome, ca. 1780], 533 × 385 mm.

Pelicans are not very well documented in Roman art and literature; the Greek 'pelikanos' may actually have referred to spoonbills. There is an Oriental belief that they kill their young and give them their own blood to revive them, which may have

fed into Christian symbolism of the pelican as a representation of Christ's sacrifice.[5] The white stork was known in Antiquity to the Romans and Greeks; there is no consistent symbolic meaning attached to them, despite their widespread presence on ancient gems, except perhaps the belief, documented by Aristotle, that they could heal their own wounds by applying oregano.[6]

Elephants on the other hand carried a rich array of cultural meanings in Roman visual and material culture. They were very well known since the expeditions of Alexander the Great, their use by King Pyrrhus of Epirus against the Romans in 282 BCE, and the Punic wars, and played an important role in Mediterranean warfare during the Hellenistic era. In Rome they were kept in zoos, displayed in triumphs, and used in animal combat in the circus. A substantial corpus of Roman elephant lore survives, mainly about the question whether they can be tamed and are able to breed in captivity, and about their character, recorded in many anecdotes: they were thought to be clever and docile, careful, grateful, with excellent memory, and even pious, because according to popular belief they adored the Sun.[7] The *gens* Caecilia used this animal as its heraldic symbol, just as the Spanish dynasty of the Bascides did in Spain in the coins they issued in the third century BCE. In the Imperial period they are regularly displayed on coins, cameos, and mosaics, to convey Imperial power, munificence, and permanence. They also often figure on Roman sarcophagi as part of Bacchus' triumphal procession returning from India, for instance in sarcophagi dating from the second century CE in the Walters Gallery and Fitzwilliam Museum (Figures 4.13 and 4.14).

Figure 4.13 Sarcophagus with the triumph of Dionysus with elephants, ca. 190 CE, Thasian marble, 120.7 × 234.9 × 101.6 cm., Walters Museum, Baltimore.

Figure 4.14 Elephant scene from the Pashley Sarcophagus, second century CE, Roman marble sarcophagus, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

This scene was also prominently displayed in the famous procession of Ptolemaeus Philadelphus, one of the founding moments for Alexandrian art of the Hellenistic period.[8]

Elephantine images and statues also had clear religious connotations. Augustus had statues of elephants made of black obsidian placed in the Temple of Concord, and according to Pliny was inspired to do so after the occurrence of a *miraculum*, a miraculous portent.[9] Perhaps most suggestive in the context of this book is their deployment in the quadruple triumph Caesar celebrated in 46 BCE. In it forty drilled elephants marched in two rows, each carrying a burning torch in its trunk.[10] This strong association of elephants with light is also present in Pompei. Here we find for instance a bronze candelabrum flanked by elephants (Figure 4.15), elephants surrounding the basis of a candelabrum, or three tiny and very elegant ones carrying another lamp in the House of the Vettii, a house that already stands out because of the frequent presence of highly imaginative candelabra that may have been the object of Vitruvius' famous denunciation of Pompeian mural painting.[11]

Figure 4.15 Casa del Sacello Iliaco or Casa del Larario di Achille (I.6.4), Pompeii, Room 11, east wall, wall painting of elephants.

4.2 Patterns and Sources

Zoomorphism is an extremely old and widespread feature of human material culture. The oldest surviving human statues and images are animal-shaped: the lion-man (Figure 4.16) for instance, of *c.* 40,000 BCE, found in the grotto of Hohlenstein-Württemberg, and now in Ulm. It occurred equally in the oldest Chinese dynasties, Mesopotamia, or the first iron-age culture in Northern Europe.[12] Among the earliest surviving human artefacts from the Middle East there is for instance a ram-headed drinking vessel from Syria dating from the end of the third millennium. It is probably the oldest instance of this kind of zoomorphic design (Figure 3.3). Another type of drinking vessel in an animal shape with a very long pedigree is that of the rhyton or sacrificial drinking horn with an animal forepart (Figure 3.4). Specimens made of silver and gilt bronze survive from the Achaemenid Empire as well as from Scythia, and the Romans produced monumental marble rhytons. Piranesi reproduced one, combined with a funerary urn, in the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi* (Figure 3.2.a).[13]

Figure 4.16 Lion-man of the Hohlenstein-Stadel, 35,000–40,000 years old, mammoth ivory carving, 31.1 cm × 5.6 cm × 5.9 cm, Ulm: Archäologische Sammlung, Museum Ulm.

Zoomorphism is also distinguished by a strong persistence of similar shapes across long periods of time. Thus the rams' heads and rhytons just mentioned return in Piranesi's artefacts and a generation after his death in the Empire Style. Zoomorphic tables, chairs, and tripod legs are another case in point. The Musée du Cinquantenaire in Brussels possesses a very rare wooden table with three ram-shaped legs from Ptolemaic Egypt; they are very similar to the legs of a tripod depicted in the Pompeian mural painting known as the 'Alexandrian Landscape'

(Figure 2.27), and resurfaces in many tripod designs by Piranesi, Percier, and Fontaine, the Manfredini Brothers or Biennais (Figures 4.17–4.19).

Figure 4.17 Table with three bovid legs surmounted by swan's heads, first BCE–first CE, probably from Luxor, Brussels, Musée du Cinquantenaire.

Figure 4.18 Charles Percier (design) and Martin-Guillaume Biennais (1764–1843) (gilder), Tripod washstand (Athénienne or lavabo), 1800–1814, legs, base, and shelf of yew wood; gilt-bronze mounts; iron plate beneath shelf, h.92.4 cm, diam. 49.5 cm.

Figure 4.19 Luigi Manfredini (1771–1840) and Francesco Manfredini (active *c.* 1810–20), Isis Tripod in gilt bronze and green antique marble, Milan 1811–13, private collection.

In the absence of clear statements about zoomorphism by Piranesi or his followers it makes perhaps more sense to assume that they considered them as highly characteristic of the Roman artefacts they so much admired, where they are equally conspicuous, and where they equally contributed to the appearance of animation that interested Piranesi so much, and which, as we have seen, played such an important role in viewing sculpture at the time. I would therefore suggest that we think about them not in terms of conventional iconographies or heraldic meaning, but focus instead on what enabled their appearance, in such similar shapes across such long stretches of

time and place. Zoomorphism is very conspicuous in Hadrian's Villa: several heads of rams, dogs, donkeys, and various birds survive and are now in the Sala degli Animali (Figure 4.20).[14]

Surviving furniture and vases display snakes and feline or caprine legs; there are sphinxes, pelicans, and griffins. Now Hadrian's Villa, like Roman temples such as the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus or the one of Apollo on the Palatine, served also as galleries displaying the wealth and variety of all the goods brought from the entire Empire, if not the known world, to Rome. They were showcases for the richness and abundance of invention of nature and humanity. It stands to reason that Piranesi, who very much favoured an aesthetics of metamorphosis, attempted to recreate that richness in his recreations of Roman material culture.

This zoomorphism, one could argue, is not so much a feature of Piranesi's work or an artistic preference of his, but a characteristic of the material culture of Republican and above all Imperial Rome he brought back to life in his etchings and in the artefacts produced after his designs in the Museo. Yet they are so persistent in his entire oeuvre, from the early etchings and drawings of the Capitoline Hill scattered with rostra, through the Grotteschi and until his last works, and the animal features have taken on so much of a life of their own, free of iconographic or heraldic conventions, that I am inclined to think they are at least as much a characteristic, or a particular interest of Piranesi's work, as a feature of Roman material culture. Also, these animal features return so often after the fall of the Roman Empire that they seem to belong to an independent, though episodic and sporadic, tradition of its own, rather than being primarily a feature of Roman Imperial culture.

His use of animal features reveals a number of patterns. In the first place, they occur very often in artefacts associated with religious sacrifice and other rituals, such as the display of trophies in rostral columns; in funerary objects such as sarcophagi and urns, and in candelabra. According to some ancient sources, but certainly according to Piranesi's contemporaries and the next generation of antiquaries, archaeologists, and curators, such as Ennius Quirinus Visconti or

Giuseppe Valadier, they had very strong symbolic meanings because of the association of light with life and the afterlife, which go back to Homer: see for instance the griffins in the frontispiece of the *Vasi, Candelabri* (Figure 1.4) and the frieze of the Temple of Faustina and Antoninus Pius.

Second, in Piranesi's work, these artefacts belong to the category of what he calls the *piccola architettura*. In the *Diverse Maniere* he introduced this term to present a new design type, that of the chimney, almost a new genre of its own, very close to furniture, that calls for its own laws of decoration, and which by its very dimensions prevents the automatic transfer of large-scale architectural ornament such as used in temple porticos etc. It is closer in fact to dress than to building, and made, like clothes, not just for usefulness, but for pleasure and enjoyment.

A third pattern, or shared feature, is that many of the animal shapes Piranesi used are very old: the ram's heads, feline legs, griffins, and hippogriffs he deploys were made not just in Rome, but in Mesopotamia, Assyria, Egypt, Scythia, and similar specimens have even been found in China. Zoomorphism is indeed extremely old and widespread. I already mentioned the ram-headed drinking vessel from Syria dating from the end of the third millennium. It is probably the oldest instance of this kind of zoomorphic design (Figure 3.3).[15] They are old, and very long-lived, but their life is an episodic, non-continuous one. Sometimes their resurgence can be linked to excavations, as in the case of the Etruscan vase that entered the Barberini Collections in the 1640s and is now in the Villa Giulia in Rome, and may have inspired the Versailles design reproduced in Figure 2.23); but very often there is not such a clear connection between availability and their use in the design of artefacts.

Finally, many animal features in Piranesi's work share a compositional feature for which the French have the term *entassement*: the piling up, one on the other, of animals or their parts. This is very conspicuous in the candelabra, but also occurs in the vases (Figure 4.21) or other composites reproduced in the *Vase, Candelabri, Cippi*. This feature of *entassement* is also very conspicuous in the rostral columns (Figure 4.8) with their animal trophies he represented in his *Prima Parte* and drawings.

Figure 4.21 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vaso antico di Marmo con suo Piedestallo, che al presentesive de in Inghilterra nella Villa del Sig. Giovanni Boyd…* from *Vasi, candelabri, cippi*, vol. II (Paris 1800–1809), 675 × 420 mm.

4.3 Reluctant Animal Servants

The *piccola architettura* Piranesi created at the end of his life exercised great influence, through his French and British students and followers, on the decorative arts c. 1800. His constant inclusion of animals and animal features prefigured, as in so many other respects, a trend in neoclassicism, and in particular in the Empire Style. A simple count of these features in a good, representative collection such as the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris or the Casa Mario Praz in Rome reveals that the large majority of objects sport some animal feature (Figures 4.22–4.24).

Figure 4.22 Italian manufacture, detail of large bookcase decorated with swans, eagles, turtles, etc, various kinds of wood

including figured maple, 275 × 368 × 101 cm, early nineteenth century, Rome: Museo Mario Praz, Inv p. 23, cat. 401.

Figure 4.23 Neapolitan manufacture, coupe with a tripod with heads of deer and ram, early nineteenth century, tinted and gilt bronze, 46 × 15.5 cm, Rome: Museo Mario Praz, Inv. 338ab, cat. 529.

Figure 4.24 Francesco Righetti (1748–1819), Tazza supported by three hippogriffs, early nineteenth century, bronze, antique green marble, 21.3 × 22.5 cm, Rome: Museo Mario Praz, Inv p. 60.

They are already very prominent in one of the pieces that would herald the taste for the neoclassical, Le Lorrain's desk of 1756, now in Chantilly (Figure 4.25). We find animals in the designs of French architects who were inspired by Piranesi, such as Legeay or Petitot (Figures 4.26 and 4.27), but also, and often in very prominent, if not ambivalent positions, in the work of architects and interior decorators such as Percier and Fontaine (Figure 2.34), who were much influenced by him. The Scottish designer Charles Heathcote Tatham criticized Piranesi for allowing his imagination to run away with him in his *Etchings, representing the best examples of ancient ornamental architecture;*

drawn from the originals in Rome, published in 1799. Nonetheless Tatham included, in this very influential design publication, among his images and the designs after them, many of the most extravagant objects with animal features from the Vatican (Figure 4.28).

Figure 4.25 Joseph Le Lorrain (1715–1759) (designer) and Joseph Baumhauer (1747–1772) (cabinet maker), Desk with file case and pendulum, 1757, oak, ebony and brass; ebony veneer, gilded bronze, and leather.

Figure 4.26 Jean-Laurent Legeay (1708–1786), Vase Supported by Intertwined Serpents, 1768, etching.

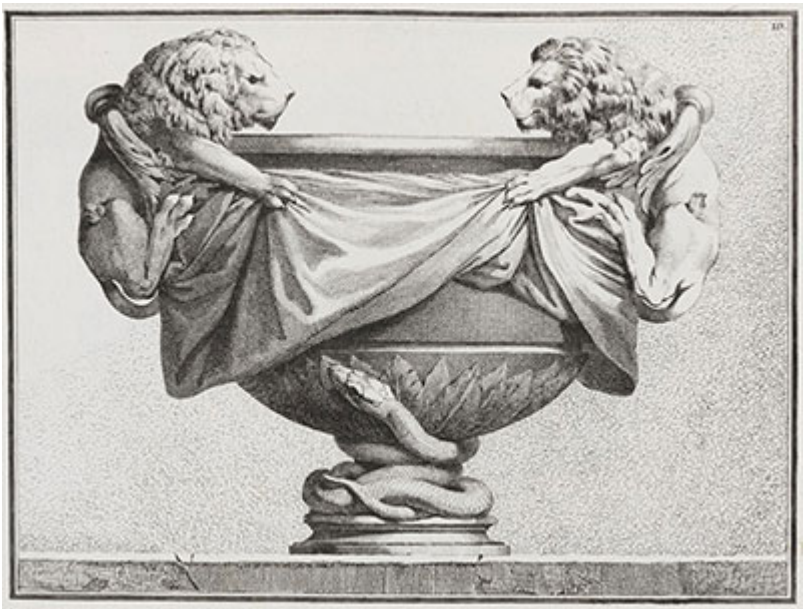

Figure 4.27 Ennemond Alexandre Petitot (1727–1801) (design), Benigno Bossi (1727–1800) (etching), *Vase with Lions* from *Suite des Vases*, Plate 10, Parma 1764, etching, 172 × 225 mm (plate).

Figure 4.28 Design attributed to Charles Heathcote Tatham

(1772–1842), manufacture attributed to Marsh & Tatham, Console table, ca. 1805–1811, red pine, gilding, travertine marble, plaster, and iron, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Rienzi Collection, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harris Masterson III, 94.1194.2,86.4 × 142.2 × 76.2 cm.

Goldsmiths such as Odiot or Biennais also placed animals in very interesting positions on their coffee pots, soup tureens, or chandeliers: as pedestals, handles, and spouts, that is either in subservient positions, where they would be touched most often, or where they would transform major functional elements (Figures 4.29 and 4.30). Explanations of this use of animal forms vary. Some consider them as magical image-making; others as attempts to create a record, remembrance or memorial; yet another school of thought sees these artefacts as appropriations of animal powers.[16] But Piranesi's zoomorphism and its descendants in the *Empire Style* offer two clues: the occurrence of many animal features in subservient positions, carrying candelabra, tables, or serving as handles; and their compositional feature of being piled up, or *entassement.* One of the few art theorists who has ventured into an account of zoomorphism and its role in animating inanimate objects is Gottfried Semper, who noted the importance of the representation of animals as carriers and bearers. He suggested, discussing the animal features of Egyptian and Assyrian furniture that would return after 1750 in the work of Piranesi and his followers that

Figure 4.29 Jean Baptiste Claude Odiot, Sauceboat, *c.* 1819, gilded silver, 34.3 × 29.6 cm × 16.2 cm. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum.

Figure 4.30 Martin Guillaume Biennais, Coffee pot, *c.* 1817, gilded silver and ebony, 37 × 22.5 × 16 cm. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum.

> The dead object is transformed by the use of animal forms into a kind of person, and individualised. Just as a vegetal ornament transforms the structure into an organism, animal ornament elevates inanimate domestic furniture into a willing or unwilling domestic animal! The furniture is signified, because I give him feet in the shape of lion's claws or the feet of deer, as an object that moves according to my will, or at least can be moved. It is in my hands, to nuance the degree of mobility I want to endow it with in a symbolic way. The capacity to support or to keep a support upright obtains an expression of life because I lend it these forms, that perform similar tasks in the animal world.[17]

By taking on the appearance of an animal, the object appropriates some of the characteristics, and the appearance of life, movement, and characteristics of animals. By extension the owner or user is also endowed with these character traits.

These animals, however, and in particular the composite varieties taken from Greek and older mythologies, are not just animated impersonations of practical functions. They carry with them their origins in Assyrian and Egyptian cults, in the same way as Piranesi's elephants and dolphins show their connotations in Roman myth and animal lore to the learned viewer. In a magnificent passage, prefiguring many of Aby Warburg's ideas on the origins of Greek art in primitive culture, Semper traces back the origins of composite animals in Assyrian cults and the textiles used to create the first sacred spaces. Here he describes how Babylonian hangings housed the entire 'population of the classical Bocksberg':

> Mythological animal allegories originated from the same cosmogonic prehistoric braids, which Asians inserted in their tapestry and thus gave the idea of such arbitrary animal compositions to the Greeks as well. Lions, bulls, deer, goats, ostrichs, eagles, fish and humans locked in combat, partly externally, partly in the sense of the hybridization of heterogeneous organisms. This was the origin of basilisks and chimaeras, tragelaphs and hippocampi,…, sirens and nereids, sphinxes and centaurs. We can confidently state that the complete population of the classical Bocksberg was released from the tapestry of the Babylonians through the spell of hellenic poetry. If we pursue this idea, it will lead us beyond the populace of the Olympus and will discern in the heroes who fought this population, the disenchanted woven heroes. In the end Zeus and Hera and the entire Olympus have to admit to the same origins.
>
> In the castle of Blay every night
> there is a murmur, rustling, trembling;
> The figures in the tapestry
> Suddenly begin to live.[18]

In a few lines Semper here provides a pedigree for the entire formal repertoire of Graeco-Roman architecture and interior

design of the Imperial period, its reprisal in Piranesi's designs and the Empire designs of Percier and Fontaine. At the same time he robs the Olympian gods and their mythology of their unique, Western status, to conclude with Heinrich Heine's suggestive evocation of the power of woven figures to appear alive and moving.

This is a fundamental passage, because Semper here clearly shows how he conceives the meaning of Assyrian animal ornament as an effect of animation, individualization, and personification, which allows the viewer or user to enter into a personal, emotional, and affective relation with the object, since by its ornament it expresses that it obeys the will of the owner. Just as human material culture according to Semper is born from the four basic crafts of weaving, carpentry, ceramics and metalwork, that is from a series of actions, the meaning of the object is conceived by him as a series of effects: movement, animation, obedience. But all these effects are *attributed* effects: it is us who act as if the object is animated, sometimes going so far as to attribute to it individuality and the expression of obedience. This is a fundamental step towards an anthropology of art and material culture in general, because Semper here removes the design of such artefacts as Piranesi's candelabra or tripods with rams' legs from the realm of autonomous artistic invention and imitation into the world of human actions and beliefs.

4.4 Totemism

Semper's analysis also opens up the possibility of a second reading of the candelabra inspired by anthropological theory. To do so, we have to switch off for a moment our tendency to think in terms of historical connections between forms, and instead concentrate on one of the most conspicuous features of candelabra design: their piling up of various objects and shapes, in particular animal ones. These remind one of totems (Figure 4.31) and Rorschach tests (Figure 4.32), particularly when put next to the illusionistic wall paper produced in Paris in the 1790s. This may sound far-fetched, but I hope to at least make

the reader reconsider initial scepticism.

Figure 4.31 Jessie Tarbox Beals (1870–1942), View of five Native American totem poles, 1904, non-projected black and white photograph.

Figure 4.32 Hermann Rorschach (1884–1922), *Inkblot Test, one of ten Rorschach inkblot test cards in cardboard case*, 1921.

To begin with, totem theory is one of the largest bodies of thought about relations between humans and animals and zoomorphism. To use it here, we have to distinguish between *concepts and theories* of totemism, which began to be developed after Piranesi's death, with its first account published in 1791, and the *phenomenon* of totemism, which for a long time was believed by anthropologists such as Frazer, Durkheim, or Mauss to be connected with the earliest stages of human development, and therefore to be a universal feature of human culture.[19] According to the very influential theory of Montesquieu, all humanity always goes through three phases in its development: savagery, barbarism, and civilization. Durkheim for instance took this theory further by arguing that since the clan is the most elementary form of human social organization, totemism must be the most primitive, and therefore universal form of religion.

All these theories have now been refuted, and totemism has become a discredited concept among anthropologists for a long time now. In that respect it is very similar to fetishism, because

both concepts were used by ethnographers and historians of religion to define non-Western cultures. Or, as Lévi-Strauss put it in the opening sentence of *Le totémisme aujourd'hui*: 'Totemism is like hysteria': concepts such as totemism, fetishism, or hysteria are developed to describe, define or diagnose behaviour, but subsequently are used to exclude persons and groups with behaviour that is considered deviant. The adorer of fetishes is never us, but always somebody belonging to another race, culture, religion, or social class. Fetishism had been deconstructed by nineteenth-century anthropologists as a concept invented by Portuguese traders and missionaries to describe the, in their view, false idols of pagan nations, but with no foundation in actual field work. It was introduced around 1900, by British anthropologists such as Frazer, and much used by Radcliffe-Brown, Durkheim, Boas, or Malinowski, as a similarly all-encompassing concept to define religious practices and beliefs, social organization and artefacts. But again, the totemist is the other; despite strong evidence to the contrary, Western societies were rarely analysed in these terms, with the exception of ancient Greece and Rome, where a series of anthropologists, including Frazer, tried to find evidence for a social organization in clans and the attendant belief in animals as ancestors and protectors.[20] Like fetishism, totemism turned out to be hardly supported by field observation, and was discredited. Like fetishism, it then enjoyed a very successful afterlife, a *Nachleben*, in cultural studies and art history, helped to a large degree by the writings of Freud on fetishism and totemism. And they both share roots in mid-eighteenth-century anthropological inquiry. In the case of fetishism the foundational text was De Brosses' *Du culte des dieux fétiches, ou, Parallèle de l'ancienne religion de l'Egypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie*, published in Geneva in 1760. In the case of totemism Lévi-Strauss has argued that its origins lie in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discours sur les origines de l'inégalité* of 1755. It precedes the first account of totemist practices by the trader John Long, who lived among the tribes of Alaska and Columbia, but already identifies the underlying problems: how to define the relation between humans and animals, with their push and pull of identification and differentiation; and how to

understand the very widespread, and ongoing, human tendency to use animals as means of identification, through emblems or heraldic symbolism?[21]

Put in the briefest of terms, totemism refers to a complex of ideas that posit a connection between the human and the animal, the animate and the inanimate world. As Frazer put it in 1910: '…an emotional relation between individuals or groups of individuals and certain manifestations of animate or inanimate nature, which may be expressed in the belief of a common descent'. It was first found among North American Woodland Indians and Australian Aboriginals; the term totem is derived from the Algonquin word 'ototeman', which means 'of my kin'. It has two main manifestations: one in the belief in a descent from animals, which expresses itself in the social organization of tribes, clans, families, etc., and kinship patterns; the other in the cult objects produced by these American and Australian tribes, but also according to some anthropologists in part of Africa, Siberia, or the Pacific, such as the famous totem poles now on show in the US Museum of Natural History in New York that were made in Alaska and North West Canada. One immediate formal similarity to our candelabra stands out: both consist of a series of vertically placed animals.

The concept of totemism as a way of describing kinship patterns, social organizations, and sets of beliefs has been discredited, for the simple reason that very few totemistic societies seem to survive that display all or the majority of defining characteristics. But the heuristic potential of this concept for our candelabra and related animal objects is striking, especially when we consider the definition Lévi-Strauss gives of it in *Le totémisme aujourd'hui*: totemism refers to a complex of ideas that posit a connection between the human and the animal, the animate and the inanimate world. The concept is a Western invention, he argued, in particular the projection, outside of our universe, as in an act of exorcism, of mental attitudes that are incompatible with the need for a discontinuity, a gap, between man and nature, which Christianity thought was fundamental. Hence assuming a continuity between these two became a characteristic attributed to the so-called primitive mind. This

radical separation between man and nature, and rejection outside the boundaries of civilization of such a continuity, also solves another problem, that of sacrifice of living beings. Sacrifice carries in it the notion of a solidarity between the sacrificer, the god, and the sacrifice, be it of a human, animal, plant, or object, and hence a continuity between the animate and the inanimate. By identifying totemism with sacrifice, Christian anthropologists could argue that totemism is a survival of such sacrificial rituals.[22]

Now I will not go so far as to say that Piranesi was a closet totemist—although we should certainly not underestimate his knowledge of Roman religious practice, and it is interesting to bear in mind the insistence in his explanatory texts on Roman ritual. Nor will I venture out into a discussion of some major other aspects of totemism, viz. its ramification in marriage rules and clan organization, but two things stand out once one starts to think about candelabra in the context of totemism. In the first place, the obsessive use of animals, not just in the candelabra, but also in the funerary monuments represented in the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi* for instance at the Funerary Monument (Figure 3.2) with a rhyton. Of course there are references here to sacrifice rituals, and here as in other artefacts Piranesi designs ornaments to show the origins of the ornament itself or the object it decorates, most strikingly perhaps in the snake/egg list ornament (Figure 4.1b) of the façade of Santa Maria del Priorato. But we should remember how insistent Roman visual culture, both in Antiquity as in the early modern period, revolved around the use of animals to define families and clans, and how persistent this practice still is, among football supporters as much as in the army or in American political parties. A major example is the rostral column (Figures 4.8 and 4.9).[23] These columns were decked out with animal snouts and heads, taken as trophies from enemy ships, standards, and banners. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the word 'rostrum' could be used both for animal snouts, lamps, and the beaks of ships. We can discern here a field of relationships of formal similarity, etymological parentage, and meaning that connects trophies, candelabra, and the use of animal features in furniture. The underlying connecting threads

are those of playing on the ritual use and origins of these objects, but also of identification and recognition through animal emblems; as well as the apotropaic use of these snarling snouts and beaks.

Connecting candelabra to totems also suggests a way of understanding their composition: as a build-up of elements that all exemplify the connectedness of human civilization to the animal realm, which, as Piranesi himself noted about the candelabrum for his own grave, can be used to express fundamental facts about human life such as its finitude. Their logic is not so much that of iconographical coherence, but that of suggesting the connectedness of human life with the natural world.

Now if their logic is not that of iconographical coherence, totemism suggests another way of thinking about the presence of animals, in particular their vividness and almost embodied lifelikeness. Traditionally the presence of animals in funeral monuments, luxury objects, or chimney pieces is linked to heraldic traditions: coats of arms with their lions, unicorns, dragons, and eagles; or emblems and *imprese* made out of inhabitants of the same zoo. But what if we consider heraldic animal elements for a moment as similar to totemic elements? In 1964 the French art historian Pierre Francastel, incidentally the author of one of the earliest and still most interesting studies of the Empire Style, published in the 1920s, curated an exhibition at the Musée Guimet in Paris, with the title *Emblèmes, totems, blasons*. This exhibition put the problem of totemism, and the possible meanings or usefulness of the concept for the study of art, in a new way, informed by Lévi-Strauss' critique of totemism which had appeared three years before, but giving it a new, semiotic twist. Even though Francastel claimed he knew nothing at all about the topic, he had some extremely insightful things to say about totemism, which resonate very much with the problems posed by Piranesi's candelabra and other animal objects. In both cases, whether we look at the Candelabra or at the heraldic symbols from Hungary, Dogon totemistic masks (Figure 4.33) and Australian totems exhibited in the Musée Guimet, the viewer is confronted with objects placed together

whose combination make no sense at all. The formal similarities Francastel signalled, but unfortunately did not illustrate, between Hungarian coats of arms and totemistic masks and heraldic signs from the Dogon only make the problem worse. Even if all these images share the same function of enabling identification and recognition of their wearer, they function in different systems and with different aims. The Hungarian coat of arms enables the viewer who is part of the same cultural system to identify the individual wearing it; but the Dogon mask operates a movement of recognition away from the individual bearer, because it refers in all its details to a cosmic system. In both cases, however, such heraldic or totemistic signs are made to show, and to keep intact, the social order in which they were made and function.

Figure 4.33 *Dogon Mask Representing an Antelope (Walu)*,

nineteenth century, wood, fibre, pigment, Charles B. Benenson, B.A. 1933, Yale University Art Gallery, Collection 2006.51.46.

Now this becomes really interesting in the case of Piranesi, where both the artefacts and the viewer are no longer part of one unified cosmic system. Without knowing the codes that govern these cosmic, religious, or tribal systems, it is impossible to reconstruct their meanings. This applies to all cultures that are removed from us in time, place, or technological development. Yet nonetheless, these objects appear to have a meaning, to be significant to us, and we believe they can somehow be integrated into our own experience of ourselves, the world around us and our culture. This a phenomenon that can be observed every day in museums like Quai Branly or the British Museum, where viewers are totally fascinated by the strangest, most exotic and enigmatic objects, and very often make sense of them by having recourse to a formal, aesthetic response, by focusing on their animated aspects, or by detecting formal patterns of organization and composition. The early reception of African tribal art by painters such as Matisse and Picasso, and surrealists such as André Breton, who focused so much on the formal and expressive qualities of the masks and fetishes they collected, and which today form the nucleus of the collection at Quai Branly, illustrate this.[24] But the candelabra elicit a similar response in us, I would suggest. For Francastel, this phenomenon is evidence for the capacity noted by Lévi-Strauss among societies in Brazil, without any textual or mathematical culture, to detect patterns and to find things, that far transcends our verbal powers of identification and recognition.

Even in a world full of enigmatic objects such as the chimney pieces of Piranesi, everything can become a sign, and the evidence of a pattern. But what role do these signs play? Francastel gives a first answer that builds on semiotics in a perfectly traditional way: signs function to represent absent objects, persons, situations, etc.; but secondly, and this is much more original, signs enable humans to appropriate objects or living beings that already existed in the external world—or in the past, one might add. To give a Goodmanian or Peircean twist to

these brief remarks by Francastel, signs are not just these conventional symbols or languages by which we refer to something outside them. They also exemplify, and thereby make present, what is absent; or in the terms of Peirce, icons want to become indexes, to move beyond the constraints and limitations of conventional signs to an embodied presence, that can exercise, to add a Gellian layer to this, the agency associated with the animal represented.

I do not want to argue here that candelabra are totem poles, nor that Piranesi was aware of totemistic objects, or of the early versions of totemism in shamanism, which very much interested Goethe and Herder.[25] But what I do argue is that when we step back for a moment from our arthistorical or archaeological conditioning, and try to find similarities in form, appearance, and composition to the candelabra, totems very easily come to mind. That is, we do not go for the social organization aspects of totemism, but for the kind of artefacts that functioned within totemist societies. Such formal similarities can be given an anthropological and historical context in the very widespread custom to use animal images in coats of arms, imprese, or emblems to show one's family origins, and clan or social allegiance; and in the Roman rites of appropriating the animal emblems of vanquished armies and parading through the city in triumphal entries, to end up attached to rostral columns. Looking at Piranesi's artefacts, and at neoclassicism in general, from this totemistic, anthropological perspective, makes us leave aside for a moment the art historical habit of tracing patterns of influence, imitation, and emulation, driven mainly by artistic and aesthetic concerns, and encourages us instead to start looking for ways of understanding not the arthistorical formal relationships, but the reasons and effects of the insistent presence of animals.

As we have seen, Semper is one of the few authors to have tried to understand what all these animal legs and faces on furniture do. His work points to two important insights: one is the issue of animation, to which we will return in the next chapter. The second, that the representation of animals in furniture is not just a matter of the inclusion of formal, ornamental motifs or of representing interesting animals; it is an

act of appropriation, nourished by a deep sense of connection, or a deep need to somehow make present these animals and the realms of culture and ideas they are part of. A very obvious place where this appropriation is acted out, is in the handles of objects, which so often have the shape of animals. Totem poles are the material representation of the connection between a society and its animal ancestors, and the use of animal coats of arms, imprese and emblems or trophies part of a similar tendency, in societies that are not organized according to totemistic kinship relations, to give material, tangible form to the connections between humans and animals. Similarly, I would argue, the inclusion of all these animals whose prototypes were part of Graeco-Roman material culture, in the work of Piranesi, and in neoclassicism in general, can be interpreted as ways of appropriating objects, and with these objects the culture in which they were created, that were present long ago. In other words, the animals in Piranesi's candelabra, as in his other work, embody connections between his eighteenth-century society and the Roman Imperial material culture he so much wanted to revive. Ultimately, but it would go beyond the boundaries of this book to argue this here in detail, one could develop a reading of these objects as attempts to achieve what we could call, in an extension of Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory, not so much a ritual coherence, but a material coherence. Piranesi's lamps, sarcophagi, funerary monuments, and vases (originally designed to function as funerary urns carrying the ashes of the deceased) are attempts to recreate, first, the material presence of Roman religious material culture; but second, and by implication, they are also attempts to achieve the material foundation of pagan ritual coherence. After all, these outsize candelabra were made in Rome to put in temples, not so much for domestic use, and they were appropriated in Christian ritual to be placed next to the altar, as Piranesi would have seen every day in his Venetian childhood, and as he did himself in his designs for San Giovanni in Laterano.

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[1] Quoted from Wilton-Ely 1994: 976: 'Le due lupe sono in atto di fremere, come per la gravezza del peso della sede, e della Persone insieme, che devevano sostenere.'

[2] See Amelung and Lippold 1956, vol. III.ii, p. 544; vol. II.ii, no. 122; Carloni 1991; González-Palacios 1994 and 2013.

[3] On the symbolism of acanthus leaves and the Corinthian order in general see Gros 1993; on ram symbolism, particularly their role as intermediaries between this life and the afterlife, see Soussan 2002. I am much indebted to Anca Dan for these references.

[4] Toynbee 1983: 195–8. See also Gluek 1966; Cassin 1997; Zucker et al. 2011; Mynott 2018.

[5] Cf. Cancik and Schneider 2008, s.v. pelican.

[6] Cancik and Schneider 2008, s.v. stork.

[7] Cancik and Schneider 2008, s.v. elephant. See also Daremberg and Saglio 1892, vol. 2, s.v. 'elephas', and the chapter on elephants in Toynbee 1983: 24–48.

[8] See the account in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* V, p. 200 ff.

[9] Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 36.196.

[10] Suetonis, *Iulius* 37.2.

[11] Cf. Toynbee 1983: 39–47. For the murals in Pompei (respectively I.6.4 and VI.15.1) see Pugliese Carratelli 1990: vol. 1, p. 324, and vol. 5, p. 545.

[12] To my knowledge there exist no general studies of zoomorphism in art that move beyond studies of the representation of individual animals/species. Attempts at broader analysis are a.o. Charpentier 1995 and Baridon 2004. The emerging field of animal studies is promising, see for instance Sahlins 2017. Ebbinghaus 2018 is a very good survey of zoomorphism and its spread over long periods in the Ancient world.

[13] Among the rare studies looking at the dissemination of zoomorphism in the ancient world see Feldman 2006, 2014; Wengrow 2015.On the metal rhytons see Ebbinghaus 2018; on the marble one Gasparri and Paris 2013: 119.

[14] See for instance no. 75 in González-Palacios 2013: a sheep's head of white marble; no. 147, a stork, or no. 95, a panther made of granite, which the Goncourt Brothers preferred to the work of Antoine Barye.

15 On the metal rhytons see Ebbinghaus 2018; on the marble one Gasparri and Paris 2013: 119.

16 See for instance Ebbinghaus 2018: 25 and 41.

17 Semper 1860: § 68, p. 360: 'Das todte Geräth wird durch die Anwendung dieser Thierformen zu einer Art von Person erhoben und individualisiert. Wie das Pflanzenornament die Struktur zu einem Organismus umschafft, so erhebt das animalische Ornament den todten Hausrath gleichsam zu einem freiwillig oder unwillig dienenden Hausthiere! Das Möbel wird dadurch, dass ich ihm Füsse in Gestalt von Löwentatzen oder Rehläufen gebe, als ein Gegenstand bezeichnet, der nach meinem Wille sich fortbewegt oder doch bewegbar ist. Den Grad der Bewegbarkeit, den ich ihm beilegen will, symbolisch zu nuanciren, habe ich in meiner Hand! Die Fähigkeit des Stützens und das Aufrechte eines Ständers erhält einen lebendigen Ausdruck dadurch, dass ich ihm diejenigen Formen leihe, die in der animalischen Welt aehnliches verrichten.'

18 Semper 1860: § 65, p. 275: 'Aus demselben kosmogonischen Urzopfe ging nun auch die fabelhafte Thierallegorie hervor, die der Asiate auf seine Teppiche stickte und dadurch auch den Griechen die Idee zu diesen willkürlichen Thierkompositionen gab. Löwen, Stiere, Hirsche, Ziegen, Strausse, Adler, Fische und Menschen im Kampfe verschlungen, theils äusserlich, theils in dem Sinne der Verzwitterung heterogener Organismen. So entstanden die Basilisken und Chimären, die Tragelaphen und Hippokampen, die Greifen und Echidnen, die Sirenen und Nereiden, die Sphinxe und Kentauren. Man darfmit Zuversicht behaupten, die gesammte Bevölkerung des klassischen Blocksberges habe aus den Tapeten der Babylonier, woselbst sie, im Zauberbann gefesselt waren, auf den Spruch hellenischer Dichtkunst sich abgelöst. Verfolgt man diesen Gedanken so führt er uns über den Pöbel des Olympos hinaus und lässt uns auch in den Heroen, die jenen bekämpfen, entzauberte gestickte Helden sehen. Zuletzt müssen sich auch Zeus und Here und der ganze hohe Olymp zu gleichem Ursprung bekennen.

> In dem Schlosse Blay allnächtig
> Giebts ein Rauschen, Knistern, Beben;
> Die Figuren der Tapete
> Fangen plötzlich an zu leben.'

The quotation is from Heinrich Heine, and can be found in Heine 1977: 494–7. On the connection that according to Semper existed between the monochrome intercolumnar hangings in temples to provide a suitably restrained background to the sumptuous spolia exhibited in them, and the monochrome colour fields in Pompeian wall painting see Semper 1860: 300–1, where he concludes: 'So wurde Rom fast ohne eigene Kunst das allgemeine Kunstmuseum der Welt'.

19 Long 1922. On the history of totemism theories see Lévi-Strauss

2008: 449–555; for recent reappreciations see Descola 2005: 203–41, and Ingold 2000: 111–32.

20 On the history of these attempts to show the totemistic nature of Greek and Roman society see Santi 2012, with a very useful historiographical survey, and Konaris 2016, chapter 5.

21 Lévi-Strauss, *Le totémisme aujourd'hui*, pp. 542–7; on p. 555 he cites the intriguing case of an American army regiment displaying totemistic identification behaviour during the First World War. Long published his account of totemism in 1791 in his *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader*.

22 Cf. Lévi-Strauss 2008: 453.

23 On rostral columns see Schipporeit 2016; Palombi 1993; Coarelli 1983: 145–60; Coarelli 1985: 308–24; Kondratieff 2004: 1–39. On their reception see Fischer 1969.

24 See for instance Snoep 2009: 10–15 and 26–32, and Dagen and Murphy 2013.

25 See Weder 2007: 39–81 and 167–81.

5

Animation, Immersion, and the Revival of Antiquity

The insistent, outsized, non-functional presence of animals in the Candelabra, and the impossibility to fit them into a conventional, post-classical iconography led us in the previous chapter to look at them in a different way, to step for a moment out of the chronological and geographical confines of European neoclassicism, and instead consider them as similar, in a few important respects, to totems. This suggested not so much that these objects are indeed totems, or that Piranesi was a closet totemist shaman, but it made us aware of the double role of representations such as Piranesi's animal sculptures: they make present what is absent, but they also embody it. By creating such embodiments, the artist, and by extension the owner or the viewer, appropriates what is represented, in this case a whole series of rather threatening, watchful beasts whose threats and alertness are harnessed, in the candelabra, in the service of the maker and owner. Thus the animal, the terrifying, but also the strange, the exotic, and the primitive are appropriated and tamed through representation.

Totemism theories are also an anthropological attempt to understanding why and how humans so persistently attribute animation, both in the sense of movement, and in the sense of human personality traits, to inanimate objects, because totemism is founded on a sense of deep connectedness, expressed in the idea of the animal origins of mankind, between man and nature, inanimate as well as animate. In this respect as well totemism is similar to theories about fetishism, which also tried to deal with people treating objects like living beings, but drew on a very different theory, that of idolatry, to explain it. Both theories are ways of accounting for the excessiveness that objects sometimes

possess: when by their material, design, or vividness they elicit reactions or are treated in ways that suggest they are more than mere dead matter. Instead they invite us, or force us, to enter into a kind of relationship normally reserved for humans.

In this chapter we will turn from animals to animation, in the context of attempts to revive Antiquity. Piranesi's contemporaries often noted his capacity to give life to inanimate stone and etching plates. Those who witnessed him while at work noted his almost uncanny capacity to give life to stone. Piranesi's contemporary Le Grand, one of his first biographers, tells us that the artist, though usually taciturn, was in the habit of speaking to his burins and etchings:

> The fire in his eyes was only a feeble reflection of the one that burned in him incessantly, and which he breathed with passion on his etching plates. It was only with these plates that he gladly took the trouble to converse. 'Ah! We shall see…if you cannot render the Italian sun! And you, you will be brick, and you, you will be marble.'[1]

Charles Townley called him 'The only one who was capable of bringing back to life antiquity'; Robert Adam praised his capacity, bordering on the divine, to infuse the arts of his time with the fresh blood of ancient invention and artistry.[2] Piranesi went along with this attribution of animation to paper, ink and stone himself, for instance in his note to the etching of the vase for James Byers (Figure 5.1) in *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*, where he comments on the intent watchfulness of the fauns. This brings us to yet another fascinating aspect of this publication: Piranesi's consistent effort to endow his creations with the appearance of life. Compare the images he made of the Cuthbert Vase (Figure 1.7.a), now in the entrance to the Museo dei Termini in Rome, but in the eighteenth century on display in the courtyard of the monastery of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, with the object itself (Figure 1.7.b: here he uses the pictorial strategy of a view *di sotto in su*, usually reserved for the portraiture of humans. He also suggested the dynamism of a living being through his enlivening rendition of handles and pedestals, particularly his use of light. In the etchings of the Newdigate Candelabrum he

suggests a materiality, a fullness of texture that recalls skin, and is very unlike the brittle marble surface of the object itself (Figure 1.8).

Figure 5.1 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi…* Plate 57: Byres Vase, now in the British Museum; Rome 1771.

These features and the surviving reactions to them point to two important underlying psychological mechanisms: first, it is almost impossible for us not to attribute animation to moving objects, or at least, it is very difficult for us not to describe such movements in terms of emotion, will, or intentionality. Very often this is the most economic way of describing complex events and processes. Second, there is an evolution in such attribution, with a tipping point. Up to a certain point, increasing lifelikeness will increase the viewer's willingness to comfortably go along with the fiction that the art work or object is in some sense animated. But there is a point where the object becomes too lifelike, and in reaction the viewer starts to feel that it is in fact uncanny. Robots can have this effect, as can films, or paintings, but viewers of Piranesi have frequently attested to this phenomenon, most famously in their reactions to the *Carceri* (Figure 5.2), where viewers tend to discern all kinds of living human presences in corners which at first appeared to be deserted, causing a typical uncanny frisson.[3] Thomas de Quincey's opium-induced terrified fascination with the *Carceri* is well known, but his French contemporary Charles Nodier's lesser observations are equally telling.[4]

Figure 5.2 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, The Drawbridge, from *Carceri*, second state, 1761, 553 mm × 412 mm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum.

Here we reach what in nineteenth-century fiction would emerge as the poetics of the uncanny or *das Unheimliche,* the appearance of life where one does not expect it: in the 'vacant staring eyes' of the House of Usher in Edgar Allan Poe's tale for

instance. It would be theorized by Freud as an unwanted return of the repressed. Today it figures prominently in robotic research, in its latest manifestation of the Uncanny Valley.[5] The concept was introduced by Josia Reichardt in a study on *Robots: Facts, Fiction and Prediction*, published in 1978, but he was inspired by the hypothesis of the Japanese robot engineer and theorist Masahiro Mori, who in 1970 first showed his diagram that would lead to the term (Figure 5.3).[6]

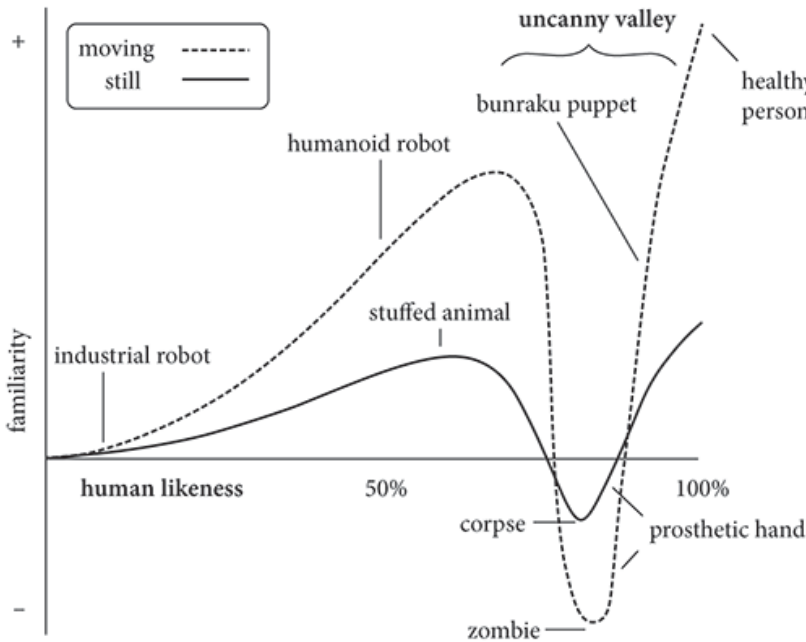

Figure 5.3 Diagram from MacDorman 2006. The caption of the diagram reads as follows: 'The hypothesized emotional response of subjects is plotted against anthropomorphism of a robot, following Mori's statements. The uncanny valley is the region of negative emotional response towards robots that seem "almost". Movement amplifies the emotional response.'

In Chapter 6 I will come back to this concept of the uncanny valley, to discuss some recent psychological research about the attribution of life to objects inspired by it. Here I want to place

this effect of Piranesi's work in a historical context of changes *c*. 1800 in the appreciation of the living presence suggested by art works, as well as in the cultures and conventions of viewing sculptures. This chapter will show this movement away from traditional ekphrastic narratives of viewing art and appraisals of *enargeia* towards a new poetics of viewing centring around fascination, immersion, and entanglement with objects and images. It will look at a series of instances where viewers try to make objects replace living beings, endow art works with life, become fascinated or immersed in the fictional worlds they afford, and become very emotionally involved with them, prefiguring what recently has been labelled as human–thing entanglement. These cases illustrate the psychological counterpart to the material efforts discussed in previous chapters to make Antiquity present again. Thus this chapter and the next continue the movement away from a narrowly art-historical consideration of the candelabra and other artefacts created in Piranesi's Museo, with the present one looking at changes in the viewing scenarios *c*. 1800, and the next, moving even further from a historical approach to one that understands the emotional involvement with objects in terms of present-day psychological theories of anthropomorphism as the attribution of human traits to objects.

5.1 Changing Reactions to the Liveliness of Statues

As I argued in my book on art and agency, attributing consciousness, a character and even a biography to a statue or other work of art was part of the rhetorical tradition of viewing art, going back to Antiquity, in which lifelikeness was the highest quality a work could attain, and also the most persuasive effect it could have on the viewer.[7] Canova's statue of Pauline Borghese (Figure 5.4) elicited such reactions. Viewers praised in particular his virtuoso ability to suggest the texture and colour of living skin by polishing the marble and adding layers of wax.[8] Such praise was part of a tradition going back to Homer's description of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* Book 18, lines 478–608.[9] In Greek

and Roman rhetoric vivid lifelikeness or *enargeia* became one of the most powerful means of persuasion. Quintilian argued that 'oratory fails of its full effect…if its appeal is merely to the hearing…and not displayed in [its] living truth to the eyes of the mind'. The orator should act on the eyes not the ears of the public, and should excite vivid images before their mind's eyes.[10] Such words have an almost physical impact; they proceed from the memory and mind of the orator to penetrate the mind of the listeners, where they activate their memories and thus trigger a similar process of imaging, almost a mental staging of the experience of looking at the scene, object, or person described by the orator. In classical rhetoric, *enargeia* was also credited with the power to transfer the viewer to the past. In Quintilian's discussion of *enargeia* as a 'placing before the eyes' or *sub oculos subiectio*, he includes it as a variety of the rhetorical figure of speech listed variously as *evidentia* or *hypotyposis*. Because of its capacity to evoke events and objects from the past, this could also become a *translatio temporum*, a transference into past times.[11]

Figure 5.4 Antonio Canova (1757–1822), *Pauline Borghese as Victorious Venus*, 1808, marble, Rome: Villa Borghese.

This rhetorical account of creating lifelikeness and its impact shaped how viewers in Europe in antiquity and the early modern period looked at statues and put into words what they saw or felt. Reactions to the Venus de'Medici (Figure 5.5) in the Tribuna in Florence are particularly well documented.[12] They range from conventional exclamations at her lifelikeness or liveliness to attributions of emotions, an inner life and perhaps even a character to the statue. Sometimes viewers would be carried away by *enargeia* and really treat the statue as a living being. Jonathan Richardson, for instance, wrote in the 1720s full of admiration of the same Venus, in particular of the 'softness of her flesh, which seemed it would yield to the touch', but he also

noted that the statue needed 'rigid surveillance…to repress the too vivid enthusiasm of some spectators'.[13] The Scottish painter Andrew Ramsay endowed the statue with a personality and an inner life, observing that she displayed 'three different passions… in three different postures. Before, she seems to invite you to her; move to the right and she seems in a more rapturous degree of pleasure, and on the left she seems to turn away from you, either in scorn or being tired.'[14]

Figure 5.5 Johann Zoffany (1733–1810), *Tribuna of the Uffizi,* with on the right the Venus de'Medici, 1772–1777, oil on canvas, 123.5 cm × 155 cm, Windsor: Royal Collection.

Piranesi's engraving of the Cuthbert vase (Figure 1.7.a) may be considered as a visual commentary on this ideal of *enargeia*. The dimensions, the monumental staging, the location of the gaze of the viewer *di sotto in sù*, as if it were a lifesize portrait of a living being, and the glistening light that runs down the sides of the vase all make the vessel seem very present, and almost render

it animate. In Piranesi's work this effort to increase the vividness of his representations is extensive. It is present in his earliest works as a persistent play of ambivalence and ambiguities. In the *Grotteschi* (Figure 5.6), for instance, the skulls have eyes that glitter and see, stone is transformed into vegetation, the statue of a satyr gazes at the Hercules Farnese, and broken idols seem to hesitate on the brink between life and petrifaction. In his later work, these efforts to animate stone occur increasingly as part of his attempts to revive the past, perhaps most tellingly in Santa Maria del Priorato. Its façade kept the original, mediaeval oculus, but surrounded it with ornaments that played aetiological games, as in the snake transformed into an egg and dart motif. The ornament decorating the Piazza is another *entassement*, this time of Roman trophies, that includes references to the origins of the arts, and to the Roman rituals that took place on this site.

Figure 5.6 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *The Skeletons*, from *Grotteschi,* in or after 1747, 390 mm × 549 mm, Rome.

Until the 1750s such attributions of life to statues were

generally understood in the rhetorical terms of *enargeia*. In the following decades, however, under the influence of the emerging discipline of aesthetics, they became increasingly a source of discomfort, because engaging emotionally with a statue as if it were a living being disrupted the autonomy of art and the rational independence of aesthetic judgement.[15] Reactions to the Canova Venus show this. Such reactions were increasingly felt to be transgressive, while the art work that seemed to cause them was considered to be excessive, and hence had to be locked up in a wooden cage, and its images covered up with shawls. Paradoxically these measures humanized the statue again, and only strengthened the excessive appeal of the statue.[16]

The desire, or the illusion, that objects could be animated, became discredited in the new disciplines of aesthetics and art history; their animation entered the domain of fiction, pathological or exotic behaviour. This shift of appraisal from an appreciation of the artistry needed to create such vivid illusions of lifelikeness, and the willingness to go along with them, to rejection of such reactions from the domain of acceptable behaviour in front of art works is not the topic of this book. But this desire for a close relation with objects also took on a particular, new shape, in the years around 1800, which does concern us here: its role in the desire to make antiquity present again. What we will see here is that viewers took part in viewing scenarios that aimed sometimes at immersion, in the sense of an imagined physical transposition, for instance by creating interiors that would suggest the immersion into an imagined space or past; but also at imaginary identification with objects such as statues.[17] As we will see, the rooms decorated with Dufour's scenes from the myth of Psyche or the Pacific created immersive spaces, in which the viewer is put at a fixed point in the interior and from this point can gaze at these mythological or exotic scenes that open up. In the case of Canova's Pauline Borghese the whole pose, and set-up, with that strange wooden couch made to look like marble, sets up an atmosphere that encourages imaginative identification, in which the goddess might turn at every moment to look at or speak to the viewer. Such an immersive relationship with art works that were made in a very

conscious attempt to bring back classical art, is very characteristic of Empire art; its style, and the poetics of its composition are very much inspired by Piranesi's late work. The emergence of this new viewing mode was caused not only by the change in appreciation of *enargeia* sketched here; it also had to do with profound changes in views about the best conditions to view statues. These were fuelled by aesthetic considerations, but also by intense experiences of the agency of statues, often connected to their fragmentary survival, which strengthened an awareness of their being primarily objects not images.

5.2 'At Last I Am in Conversation with Things': New Narratives of Looking at Statues in Rome

When Goethe at last arrived in Italy in 1786, he exulted in his letters to Frau von Stein that he had started a conversation with things, which now, on Italian soil, at last spoke to him.[18] Usually this statement is considered within the context of his philosophy of nature and his attempts to have access to the things, or phenomena themselves, which also fed into his vast artistic and scientific collections at Weimar. But it is also part of a wider concern, in his work as in that of his contemporaries, with the unstable nature of things, with their relentless, ceaseless shifts from tools, instruments, or works of art that remain reasonably stable within their allotted ontological status of objects for human consciousness and use, to very active agents. In his *Wilhelm Meister* novels for instance, the development of the protagonist can be described as one from a fetishist engagement with objects, such as images of his absent beloveds or his medical instruments, to a symbolic interaction. We also know from his *Italian Journey* and other ego documents that he took a keen interest in the fetish theories developed by De Brosses in France, and published from the 1780s onwards in Germany by Meiner and others, as well as in fetishist and shamanic practices.[19] In the little known novella *Der Sammler und die Seinigen* he presented a complete catalogue of the range of emotional involvement with images, from religious memorials to outright fetishism in a pre-

Freudian sense. He even appears to have possessed a Shaman costume himself, in which he paraded in Weimar for restricted audiences.

As the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg wrote, 'The object is the simplest prejudice with which we can work in our experiential world…. For history, the object scheme means: at a particular stage in our lives we want to be able to recognize what we have known.'[20] Goethe's engagement with objects shows not only these ambiguities but also the deeply ambivalent, if not terrifying character that the presence of objects could assume. They intrigued him, fascinated him, but also terrified him, and forced him, like many of his contemporaries, to develop entirely new narratives of spectatorship.

5.2.1 Laocoon and Medusa

In 1798 the poet Novalis noted the following observation about the Laocoon sculpture group: 'Could we not conceive of a more inclusive moment, in short of a higher degree, in the drama of Laocoon—perhaps the one where the deepest pain is transformed into ecstasy—resistance in surrender—the most intense life into stone.' He added, between brackets, almost as an afterthought: 'Should the sculptor not always grasp the moment of petrifaction —and search for it—and represent it—and only be able to represent this one?[21]

The classical tradition of sculpture criticism is reversed here in two ways. First, Novalis suggests to represent another moment in the story, pushing its drama even further, beyond pain and despair, to the moment of ecstasy and surrender. Second, he suggests that the highest aim of the sculptor is not the animation of marble in representing life in its utmost vividness; but instead the petrifaction of life in stone. At the same time, he continues to adhere to the classical ekphrastic tradition by conceiving the sculptor's task to be the representation of the culmination of Laocoon's drama. Like Philostratus and Callistratus, his Greek predecessors from Antiquity, he focuses on the representation—and its vivid description or ekphrasis—of an action, in ancient

Greek *to drama*. We find here in Novalis's brief fragment, in a few pregnant sentences, two key issues in many accounts of classical sculpture produced in Germany around 1800: on the one hand the topic of animation versus petrifaction, on the other the question of narrative and how to represent it with sculptural means. The first figures mainly in viewers' accounts, the second is a major theme in artistic theory of this period.

This reversal occurred at a time when the viewing conditions of sculpture also changed radically. The Museo Pio-Clementino, the first public sculpture gallery, opened in 1771. It presented statues in one, unified space, which did not separate the space of the statues from that of the viewer, and thus allowed the viewer to engage in a direct relation, if not visual dialogue, with the sculptures. In fact it proved the ideal setting for Winckelmann's descriptions, which are no longer ekphrastic accounts of the action represented, but accounts—or even re-enactments—of viewing experiences that are much indebted to the Pietist confessional literature of his Protestant upbringing (Figure 5.7, showing a Cicerone in action in this museum).[22]

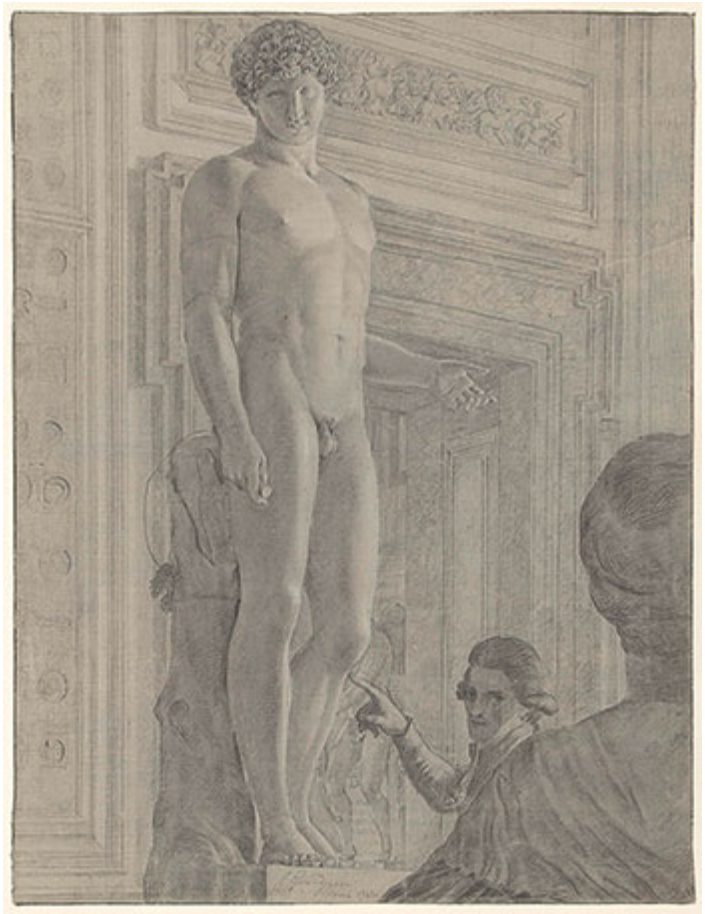

Figure 5.7 Jean Grandjean (1752–1781), *Statue of Antinous Albania in the Capitoline Museum in Rome,* 1780, drawing, 535 mm × 405 mm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum.

Narrative in sculpture had become an issue after the publication of Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766) and Herder's *Plastik* (1778). Lessing dismissed the humanist doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* and its underlying assumption of a representational equivalence, despite differences in medium, between poetry and the visual arts. He argued that poetry and prose are narrative arts, that is arts predicated on an unfolding in time, both in their own telling of a story and in the way they are read or viewed;

whereas the visual arts are arts of the moment, presenting one pregnant moment, and perceived in one glance.[23] Herder severed traditional equivalents between the visual arts and poetry or prose even more radically perhaps, by claiming for sculpture a separate status, since for him its perception and appreciation is not visual, mediated and intellectual, but tactile, and hence unmediated and sensual. Close, attentive viewing of statues should result in their animation, for the primitive as well as for the cultivated spectator.[24]

One of the many implications of the views of Herder and Lessing was that they questioned traditional strategies of description or interpretation. It was no longer self-evident to draw on the ekphrastic tradition, in which the speaker describes not so much the material, pictorial sculptural characteristics of a work of art, but the action that is represented so vividly that viewers are persuaded they look at the event or persons themselves, not at their image. See for instance Callistratus' description of a statue of Medea, which attributes a character, inner life and a narrative of deliberation to Theseus' wife on the brink of killing her children:

> I also saw the celebrated Medea in the land of the Macedonians. It was of marble and disclosed the nature of her soul in that art had modelled into it the elements which constitute the soul; for a course of reasoning was revealed, and passion was surging up… and what one saw was an interpretation of her whole story.[25]

Such ekphrastic strategies operated precisely on the basis of the representational equivalence rejected by Lessing; they were verbal, mediated, and therefore could not accommodate the tactile, unmediated, sensual experience of sculpture Herder advocated. Within these new Roman settings, the impact of the statue on the viewer, what we would now call its agency, acquires a new intensity, which was strengthened by the fashion for torch-lit visits, to which we will return: under the flickering light of torches and candles the marble appeared to become animated.

In this context a new topic appeared: that of petrifaction, used both to describe the highest art of the sculptor and the agency

exercised by statues. In other words, the mythological paradigm used to think about the sculptor's art shifts from Pygmalion to Medusa. At the same time, the narrative represented by the statue makes place for a narrative of spectatorship. In Goethe's work his accounts of the Laocoon and the Medusa Rondanini, and subsequent viewers' reactions to this work, illustrate this very well.

From the moment Goethe saw the Medusa Rondanini (Figure 5.8) in Rome in 1786, he was utterly fascinated by it. Thus he wrote about the recently discovered head in the Rondanini collection:

Figure 5.8 *Medusa Rondanini,* Roman copy after a fifth-century BC Greek original by Phidias, Munich: Glyptothek.

> Opposite us, in the Palazzo Rondanini, there is a mask of Medusa in which, in an elevated and beautiful shape of the face, and larger than life, the fearful petrifaction of death is expressed in an inexpressibly striking way.…
>
> It is a wondrous work, which while expressing the conflict between death and life, between pain and pleasure, exercises an unnameable spell over us unlike any other problem.[26]

The Medusa Rondanini continued to exercise its spell over him throughout the rest of his life. In 1826, at the very end of it, he finally obtained a plaster cast of it from the King of Bavaria, which is still in the Goethe-Haus in Weimar, and occupied a very prominent place among his collection. In 1833 the intense feelings of discomfort the Medusa Rondanini could still cause were recorded in minute and fascinating detail by the philologist Joseph Anselm Feuerbach, the father of the painter. It is an account of his struggle to deal with the unsettling suggestion of the final spasms of agony in a stone mask that lacks life, and the paradoxical feat of bringing together the incomprehensible fullness of life in the moment when death occurs. Feuerbach moves away from the mask while closing and opening his eyes to create the illusion that Medusa slowly dies, to come back again to life.[27]

As in the passages by Novalis and Goethe quoted earlier, the locus of the narrative shifts. It is no longer the statue's representation of a tragic moment. Instead the narrative recounts the viewer's experience of being caught by the play between petrifaction and animation, or the endless, and often terrifying fascination exercised by an inanimate object that appears to live and breathe—the dialectic of the uncanny valley. But these new viewing narratives, with their stress on a single moment and the flickering of life, share a new setting: that of the torch-lit visit and its relative, the tableau-vivant, that both create a climate of immersion.

5.3 Torchlight Visits and Tableaux-vivants

The public exhibition of sculpture was not the only viewing situation to change in the decades around 1800: at the same time, private viewing parties came into fashion in which spectators engaged informally, but no less intensely with statues. Both the torch-lit visits to the Museo Pio-Clementino or the Villa Albani and the tableau vivant, which became equally fashionable around 1800, favour a close, direct, one-to-one engagement with the statue.[28] The flickering light of torches, combined with the often carefully orchestrated parcours through a collection, created a temporal dynamic that heightened the theatrical nature of such visits. Tableaux vivants had their own temporality, because the persons enacting the art work slowly froze in their attitude, and then gradually started to move again.[29] Both viewing modes favoured an appreciation of the culminating moment when the artwork became fully visible. They allowed its agency to unfold in a very direct and unmediated way, often resulting in claims that the viewer seems to be petrified while the statue becomes animated.

Goethe was involved in both viewing modes. In the *Italian Journey* he offers a particularly suggestive account, possibly based on first-hand observation, of Lady Hamilton's Attitudes, who developed a pioneering fusion of the tableau vivant and a torch-lit view of an artwork. He noted how Lord Hamilton literally looked at his wife as if she were a work of art, and one that he fetishized intensely: 'The old knight holds up a torch and has surrendered himself with his whole soul to this object.'[30] A few weeks later Goethe also described how the transformation of Lady Hamilton into a painting and an object of desire had progressed even further: she now performed her attitudes literally framed by a large sculpted and gilded picture frame. His lordship was no longer satisfied with seeing his wife as a living statue, he also wanted to gaze on her as a painting (Figure 5.9).[31]

Figure 5.9 James Gillray (1756–1815), *A Cognocenti* [sic] *contemplating ye Beauties of ye Antique,* depicting an elderly Sir William Hamilton inspecting his antiquities, among which we see the image of his wife several times, 1801, hand-coloured etching, 34.9 cm × 25.5 cm, London: British Museum.

Within a theatrical setting Lady Hamilton here achieved a

changeant effect of representation, embodiment and actual presence that viewers found irresistible and sometimes deeply troubling. The setting encouraged a willing suspension of disbelief, and created a viewing situation in which viewers could allow themselves to enjoy a divided consciousness, going along with the fiction of looking at a living, breathing statue, and allowing themselves the behaviour that would not be acceptable either in a museum or when looking at Lady Hamilton when not performing, but at the same time well aware of the safety valves offered by its performance character.

Goethe's novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809) played a major role in creating the fashion for tableaux vivants. Here the public marvelled at the tableaux staged by its protagonist Luciane, their costumes, mise en scène, and effects of the illumination. But at the same time, the presence of real, living human beings instead of their images, made them afraid: 'the presence of what was real instead of appearance [produced] a kind of fearful sensation'.[32] In this genre, aesthetic distance is abolished in favour of the absolute appropriation of the art work by the spectators turned actors, culminating in their literal incarnation or embodiment of the work in their bodies and gestures. Aesthetic distance is also abolished in the unhibited gazing of spectators at the actors.

Very few images or detailed accounts of these tableaux vivants survive. Texts reflecting on their aesthetic implications are equally rare. There are a few reviews of such stagings in Weimer, Dresden, and Vienna by the German archaeologist Carl August Böttiger.[33] It is Goethe who offers the first elements for a more thorough analysis in his short remarks on the genre in his essay on his monodrama *Proserpina* that culminates in a tableau vivant of Arcadia, the descriptions in the *Wahlverwandtschaften*, and the observations in his novella *Der Sammler und die Seinigen*, a fictional catalogue of human involvement with artefacts and images. The *Wahlverwandtschaften*, as in many contemporary novels, particularly those by Jane Austen, show how such theatricals serve as a free space, where things may be expressed or accomplished during the representation, which cannot be said or done in real life. In a recent study Gisela Brude-Firnau has

shown how the tableaux vivants organized in the *Wahlverwandtschaften* figure or recall in the memory of the viewers recent events of the French Revolution, and above all the recent French occupation of Weimar.[34] But they do so in a rather strange way. The actors represent Belisarius, Ahasverus, or Esther on stage, can take their place and assume their identity for a few brief moments. They cannot exercise the agency of these personages in real life (the Duchess of Weimar for instance had hoped to protect her people the way Esther did with the Jews), but they can represent it on stage and literally embody it. By assuming the role, figure, and gestures of painted persons, the actors learn to know very deeply the paintings they enact and the actions they represent, and how they interrelate. Through their *eloquentia corporis* they become, for a few minutes, these painted persons, and embody the situation or emotions depicted. Thus they achieve at the same time a direct, unmediated interaction with the art work, and the most intense embodied enactment of its living presence.

Carl August Böttiger also noted this genre's suggestive ontological hybridity. In his review of the *Wahlverwandtschaften* he situated the genre between spatial and temporal forms of art that, being permanent, display themselves in space; and those, more ephemeral, that deploy themselves in time. In tableaux vivants by contrast, he wrote, in a formula that seems to announce Aby Warburg's description of pathos formulas: 'die Wellen des bewegten Lebens sind wie durch Zauberkraft festgehalten': the waves of moving life have been fixed as if by magic.[35] Because of their hybrid and ephemeral character, tableaux vivants are closer to dance than to painting or sculpture. A few years later, in another review, Böttiger singled out another hybrid aspect of the genre: because of the presence of living actors, it differs from the fine arts, and comes closer to wax figures exhibited in curiosity cabinets, churches, or anatomy museums. They can even look like the victims of Medusa's petrifying agency. In his review of Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* he suggested that Goethe held up Medusa's head to the actors.[36]

Goethe also identified the problem of grasping how a statue

can only represent a moment but nonetheless suggest an event, movement, life, that all unfold in and over time, without having recourse to ekphrastic narrative strategies. In his essay on the Laocoon he suggested torch-lit viewing is the best solution:

> This work of art is extremely important because of its representation of the moment. When a work of visual art should really move in front of the eye, a passing moment should have been chosen: shortly before no part of the whole should have been in this situation, and shortly after every part should of necessity have abandoned its position; through these means the work will ever again be alive for millions of viewers.

To grasp the intention of the Laokoon correctly, one should take a position at the fitting distance with closed eyes; one should open them and close them immediately, and thus one will see the entire marble in movement ….I would say that, in the way it now stands, it is a fixated lightning, a wave, petrified in the moment it reaches the coast. This effect arises when one sees the sculpture group at night lit by torches.[37]

As mentioned in the Introduction, torchlight sculpture visits enjoyed a brief but intense fashion in the decades around 1800 in Italy, Germany, and France. These visits can be related to the profound change Winckelmann instigated in guided art tours: instead of Ciceroni reciting lists of facts about the art works, he tried to make his public engage emotionally and aesthetically with the statues.[38] By the end of the eighteenth century visits by night were made to sculptor's studios, but above all to sculpture collections, at the Vatican Belvedere, the Villa Borghese, or the Musée Napoléon. Canova recommended them because torchlight enables the viewer to appreciate the 'gradazione della carne', the subtlety of the handling of the marble surface, much better than the even light of day.

The French diarist Joseph Joubert, a friend of Châteaubriand, puts this perhaps most briefly and suggestively. Under such viewing conditions, in the flickering light statues seem to move towards the viewer from the dark. The play of light on the marble suggests living skin, and 'those ideal and soft forms that seem to surround living bodies'.[39] Gabriele von Bülow, the

daughter of Wilhelm von Humboldt, described her torchlit visit to the statues of the Vatican in similar terms:

> On Saturday, we went to see the statues at the Vatican illuminated by torchlight; it was a magnificent sight, far finer even than the Capitol. I thought of Goethe's words 'Marmorbilder steh'n und seh'n mich an' for they really seem to look at you; it is as if there were a living soul within the marble, a soul to which you could confide your most inner thoughts.[40]

K. Ph. Moritz introduced another aspect in his account of a torchlight visit to the Apollo Belvedere in 1786–88. Only under such circumstances, he argued, can one really see and appreciate antique statuary; but more importantly, because one sees the statue in its completeness in such light, its fragmentary survival is repaired, time stands still, and perception is concentrated in one moment.

> [One can] hardly say that one has seen these highest works of art, when one has not seen them rather often in this kind of light. -- The finest relief then becomes visible, and an infinite variety shows itself in what otherwise looks uniform. As all this manifold constitutes nevertheless only one perfect whole, one is now able to see ***suddenly*** all these beauties that can be seen, the notion of time disappears, and everything presses together in one moment, that could last forever, if we had been observing beings only.[41]

He continues with an attack on Winckelmann, whose descriptions —'a front of Jupiter, pregnant with the goddess of wisdom etc.' distract viewers from being moved by the 'pure beauty' of the statue as a whole, and force them into a narrative viewing mode, *enumerating* the beauties of the work. Moritz here eliminates the narrative aspect of statues, their presenting a story, from its ideal perception, and thereby neatly sidesteps Lessing's problem. Put slightly differently, statues need a viewer to become complete and whole again; and that completeness is achieved when they appear to be living bodies.

In such circumstances the viewing setting becomes very similar to that of a theatre audience watching a play. The statue

viewer is in the dark, and has to wait until the light unveils the statues, moves over them, singles out parts like a spotlight, disappears or is extinguished. It could be an intensely dramatic experience, in which viewers like Goethe felt that they were being watched by the statues just as they tried to see them. The theatrical nature of torchlight viewing is made quite explicit in the account of such a party by Louis-Nicolas de Forbin (1777–1841), in the 1800s the lover of Pauline Borghese, and subsequently, during the Restoration, the second director of the Louvre. His nocturnal visit to the Museo Pio-Clementino was organized by Canova, and took place in the winter of 1813–14. It rehearses all the elements we have already seen—the animating effect of light, the realization that only under such circumstances statues can be really appreciated—but Forbin adds a new element: that of popular theatre, and in particular of the pantomime and the phantasmagoria:

> When we came closer the representation of the animation of marbles began: the orchestrated movements of the torch-bearers, which took place successively or at the same time, communicated themselves to the statues, either by the disappearance or the return of shadows. They received life from the light; gods and goddesses, men and women, realised under our eyes the miracle of Prometheus, who animated his statue with the fire he had stolen from Heaven…In the presence of such a gathering of supernatural beings…, whose various attitudes commanded, under the spell of this poetic phantasmagoria, a kind of admiration or religious terror…The silence, rigorously observed during this strange and marvellous scene hindered by itself alone any comparison with human life; while the play of light…infinitely varied…the gestures of these marbles, whose immobility had disappeared.…Thus, Canova had imposed, through the ingenious and powerful disposition of light, on all statues the pantomime that was proper to them.[42]

Forbin here summarizes almost all elements that make up what we might call the *dispositif imaginaire* that nourished engagement with art works *c*. 1800: the immersive character of viewing classical sculpture; the willingness to go along with the illusion not just of animation, but of a return of pagan divinities, and to

enter into their presence; but at the same time a keen awareness of the theatricality and staged character of this occasion.[43] Canova is called a 'thaumaturge', and the passage ends with a description of the return of the pagan gods, for one night, to Napoleon's Rome which thus becomes, it is suggested, the reincarnation of Augustan Rome.

Sometimes identification would lead to excess, for instance when viewers at the parties organized to see the Venus Borghese became so seduced by Canova's suggestion of a living body that they would try to touch and fondle the marble. At the other end of the emotional spectrum, Caroline von Humboldt attempted to recreate the presence of her dead son by adding his portrait to an antique Herm. Both varieties of entanglement with objects point at the last element of the *dispositif imaginaire* reconstructed here: the role of embodiment, most of the times only desired and dreamt of, in immersive experiences.

5.4 Empire Objects: Entanglement Embodied

So far we have looked at various situations in which objects, their viewers and owners, and sometimes their impersonators, become entangled, in various ways: the embodied performance of paintings or statues in Emma Hamilton's Attitudes or the tableaux-vivants performed in Weimar or Paris, enabled or allowed actors to engage in very layered fictional identifications with the persons and situations they re-enacted. In the case of the Medusa Rondanini we can observe one particular variety of emotional involvement: intense fear, mixed with admiration and desire. This case offers perhaps the clearest case of agency rather than human–thing entanglement, because here viewers attribute, in what Gell would call an act of abduction, a character, biography, emotions, and actions to a lifeless object.

In Paris immersion became a very conspicuous feature of interior design in the late 1790s. The papiers peints created by Dufour (Figure 5.10), suggested entire sequences of scenes, for instance of Eros and Psyche, the travels of Captain Cook or fictive combinations of buildings on the banks of the Seine. These were

large-sized, covered entire walls, and excluded windows.[44] They are very much part of the tendency towards designing immersive spaces. The Hôtel de Beauharnais for instance, an early eighteenth-century town house by Germain Boffrand redecorated by Percier and Fontaine for Eugène de Beauharnais from 1803 to 1806, included a bath room whose walls were all covered with mutually reflecting mirrors (Figure 5.11).

Figure 5.10 House of Dufour, Scene from the Psyché cycle, *c.* 1800, 215 cm × 182 cm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum.

Figure 5.11 Hôtel de Beauharnais, Paris, Turkish Bath, 1803–6.

When Joseph Gandy, the draughtsman of Sir John Soane, visited the Hôtel de Beauharnais, he wrote about this Turkish Bath: 'The whole of the walls and doors were lined with mirrors. […] This complete catoptric room from its reverberating reflections produced a wonderful effect of artificial space. The columns were reflected to infinity in each direction. The Mind fancied a fairy tale and an enchantment.'[45] This bathroom is part of the French fashion for decorating drawing rooms with mirrors instead of paintings or tapestries, which had started in the second half of the eighteenth century. Casanova noted its immersive effect, operating by means of the fascination of endlessly reflected mirror images when he described a room entirely hung with mirrors, or 'toute tapissée de glaces':

> She was surprised by the act of magic that made her see everywhere, and at the same time, although she remained motionless, her own person in a hundred different points of view. Her multiplied portraits, offered to her by the mirrors in the clear

> light of all the candles placed next to her, presented a new spectacle that made her fall in love with herself.[46]

The architectural critic La Font de Saint-Yenne had serious doubts about the moral implications of these illusionistic powers:

> *Mirrors*, the description of whose effects we would liken to those of a fairy tale, to a wonder beyond belief, had not their presence become too familiar; *Mirrors*, which take on the guise of pictures of an imitation so perfect that it rivals nature…; *Mirrors*, fairly rare during the last century and so plentiful during our own, have dealt a mortal blow to this fine art [of painting],…having appropriated to themselves the decoration of *Salons* and *Galleries*. Piercing walls in order to enlarge apartments and join new ones to them; reflecting with usurious interest the rays of light which strike them (those either of daylight or candlelight), how could man, the born enemy of darkness and everything which may occasion melancholy, how could he have denied himself the enjoyment of such specular decoration which cheers by illuminating him and which in tricking his eyes never tricked his heart of the very real pleasures which they afforded him? How could he have preferred the ideal and so often sombre beauties of painting, of which the satisfaction derives entirely from an illusion to which one must be party and which appeals neither to the vulgar nor to the ignorant?[47]

Charles de Wailly's design for the series of mutually reflecting mirrors for the Salone del Sole in Palazzo Spinola in Genua (1773), now destroyed, shows the effect of such a large space whose walls are covered with mirrors seen from the threshold: not so much a narcissistic multiplication of the viewer, as a virtually endless succession of vistas leading into infinite space (Figure 5.12). In the case of the Hôtel de Beauharnais, where other rooms recreated ancient Egypt or Rome, this resulted in a sense of the past appearing fleetingly accessible, but also very transitory.

Figure 5.12 Charles de Wailly (1730–1798), design for the mirror drawing room of Palazzo Spinola, Genua, 1760s, pen and China ink, ink wash, on paper, 101 cm × 130 cm, Paris: Louvre.

Another typical Empire object added to the immersive effect of mirrors. In the late 1790s mobile lifesize mirrors came on the market. They had mahogany frames decorated with bronze ornaments illustrating the myth of Eros and Psyche, and were hence called Psychés (Figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13 Anon., *Psyché*, mahogany, gilt bronze appliqués, and glass, *c.* 1800, Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs.

These would stand in the bedroom of the lady of the house, where her husband or lover would visit her, and where they could admire themselves in these reflecting surfaces, framed by scenes from antiquity, and thus transform themselves into a tableau vivant they could control. The painter David placed one of these Psychés next to his painting of the Sabine Virgins when it was first displayed in the Louvre, so that viewers could see themselves reflected together with a part of the painting, transformed into republican Romans, particularly if they were

dressed in the latest fashion of the 1790s for Roman dress and haircuts.[48]

Objects could also, however, afford a very physical entanglement. Canova created his *Venus Victorious* by means of the procedure of *moulage à vif*, which at the time created quite a scandal. Surviving mouldings became highly prized by collectors such as Vivant Denon, and a moulding of her breast survives in the Museo Napoleonico in Rome (Figure 5.14). But there is yet another instalment in this series of excessive objects: the cup made by the Imperial goldsmith Odiot using this moulding, endowed with a handle in the shape of a butterfly (Figure 5.15). In the Empire context this was a clear reference to the human soul, but the cup and its handle also offered a very layered affordance of literal, tactile, and conscious entanglement. Such cups may have been used as night lamps, and are thus relatives of the conscious lamps we discussed earlier. There are historical precedents for such cups. In ancient Greece and Southern Italy so-called mastoid cups made in the shape of a breast were produced quite frequently, often decorated with apotropaic eyes (Figure 5.16). Closer to Pauline Borghese's time, in the 1780s, a porcelain service was created at Sèvres for Marie-Antoinette, to drink milk produced at her dairy in Rambouillet. It was designed by J-M Lagrenée, or possibly by Hubert Robert, and included a set of 'tétons avec ses pieds en têtes de chèvre', cups in the shape of a breast supported by goat's heads (Figure 5.17).[49] It may have been inspired by the images of mastoid cups reproduced in Hancarville's *Antiquités Grecques et Etrusques* of 1766–67, which served as a model for many neoclassical porcelain objects designed in Sèvres in the 1780s.[50]

Figure 5.14 Antonio Canova [attr.], plaster moulding of Pauline Borghese's breast, *c.* 1808, Rome: Museo Napoleonico.

Figure 5.15 Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot (1763–1850), cup in the shape of Pauline Borghese's breast, *c.* 1810, gilt bronze, Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs.

Figure 5.16 Terracotta mastoid, black-figure terracotta vase from Greece, ca. 500 BC. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Roger Fund, 1941.

Figure 5.17 Manufacture royalle de Sèvres, designed by Jean-Jacques Lagrenée le Jeune (1739–1821) and Louis Simon Boizot (1743–1809), Breast Bowl from the Service for the Rambouillet Dairy, soft paste porcelain bowl and hard paste porcelain support, after 1787, Sèvres: Cité de la céramique.

In any case, Odiot and his colleagues were masters of the embodied handle (Figure 5.18). Empire objects stand out by this way of shaping handles which had to be grasped to use the object, but rarely by their owners or patrons. Instead they watched their servants do so. By their very physical, corporeal shape, they set up, and stage, a very different interaction between the object and its user than ordinary, fairly abstract handles do, as people will confirm who have held these objects. They give the handle a physical, embodied shape; but they also embody the act of grasping, and by this thematization they add yet another layer

of interaction with the viewer, who is made aware that these objects not only invite to be touched, and afford a very refined kind of human–thing entanglement, but also gently nudge the viewer to start thinking about the relations that are set up here.

Figure 5.18 Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot, sauce boat, gilt bronze, Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs.

5.5 The Immersive Powers of Objects

In the last decades of the eighteenth century major changes occurred in the display and viewing modes of statues and artefacts. The first public sculpture galleries opened, first in the Museo Pio-Clementino, soon to be followed by the Galérie des

Antiques in the Musée Napoléon in Paris. They gave the public access to unprecedented numbers of statues from the entire Mediterranean world. They also became the location for new ways of looking at statues: at close range, guided by ecstatic connoisseurs such as Winckelmann or uncomfortably fascinated anthropologists such as Herder, who allowed much more space for emotional reactions and personal involvement. In the fashion for torch light visits viewing antique sculpture became a highly staged theatrical performance, with its own temporal dynamics of statues emerging gradually from obscurity, and short moments of full revelation which gave the impression that their eyes were seeing and looking at the viewer. Empire interior design catered to this desire for immersive viewing, with its rooms entirely covered with mirrors sending reflections back and forth in endless vistas, and its objects that invited close physical contact, but at the same time made viewers think about embodiment.

The examples given here illustrate the profound changes that took place in the period 1770–1830 in what we would now call object fetishism or living presence response. In reactions to art works, the traditional, rhetorically informed praise for *enargeia* makes place for aesthetic distancing, but also for a desire for immersion and imaginative identification that is much more oriented towards objects, and their power to suggest the presence of absent persons or absent antiquities. At the same time, the narrative ekphrastic tradition is replaced by a desire for the revelation of the work of art in one powerful moment of material presence. Finally, the Christian tradition of relic adoration had informed much early modern entanglement with objects, with its claim of physical contact as the basis for an object's power to somehow make present the dead. Around 1800, this Christian foundation dissolves, but the desire to make present dead persons or absent pasts remains as strong as ever. It is no longer nourished by a theology of real presence or reliquary power, but by a willingness to engage in an as-if in which artefacts are believed to have the power to create such presences, be they material, as we saw in the previous chapters, or immersive. I want to conclude this chapter by a final addition to the series of Empire objects discussed here: the photograph, made by Nadar in

1896, of the Comtesse de Greffulhe, one of the models for that fine connoisseur of the Empire Style, the Duchess of Guermantes (Figure 5.19). In it she stands, wearing an Empire dress by Worth, in front of a Psyché by Jacob-Desmalter. It illustrates the ongoing desire to immerse oneself into a past, and become, at least visually, part of an Empire tableau-vivant. But the desire can only be gratified by means of the presence of an object from that past.

Figure 5.19 Nadar [Gaspard-Félix Tournachon], 1820–1910, photograph of Elizabeth, Comtesse de Greffulhe, in an embroidered Princess-line evening gown by Jean-Philippe Worth and her Empire *Psyché,* 1896, Paris: Musée Galliéra.

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[1] Legrand 1978: 226: 'Le feu de ses yeux n'était qu'une faible lueur de celui dont il brûlait sans cesse, et qu'il exhalait avec passion sur ses planches. Ce n'était qu'avec elles qu'il faisait volontiers les frais de la conversation. 'Ah! nous verrons' leur disait-il … 'si vous ne rendrez pas le soleil d'Italie! pour toi, tu seras brique, et toi, tu seras marbre.'

[2] Denison 1993/4: 303–31.

[3] On Piranesi's literary reception, listing many of such reactions, from De Quincey via Baudelaire to Marguerite Yourcenar, see Miller 1978. See also Verschaffel 2016.

[4] Nodier 1833; see also Keller 1966.

[5] On the uncanny see Vidler 1992, and Royle 2003. E.Th. Hoffmann's tale *Der Sandmann* (1816) and Sigmund Freud's essay *Das Unheimliche* (1919) are the foundation for the artistic tradition and critical study of the uncanny.

[6] The diagram is reproduced in MacDorman 2006; see also Airenti 2012.

[7] Van Eck 2016: 7–9; see also Bussels 2012: 25–77 for a recent overview of this tradition.

[8] The ability of sculptors to suggest a living body had become a recurring theme in French eighteenth-century debates about the relative merits of Michelangelo, Bernini, and their classical models. See Cousinié 2003.

[9] Lecocq 2010.

[10] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VI.ii.29–30; see Van Eck 2016, Chapter 2.

[11] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* IX.ii.40–1; cf. Webb 2009.

[12] See Hale 1976.

[13] On Richardson see Gibson-Wood 2000.

[14] Quoted by Hale 1976: 47, from Spence 1966: vol. I, no. 1289.

[15] See f.i. Herder's ambivalent reaction to the Borghese Hermaphrodite, with its mix of sexual attraction and embarrassment, in Van Eck 2016, Introduction.

[16] See for a more detailed treatment of the reactions this statue elicited Van Eck 2015.

[17] See Grau 2003 for the distinction between immersion, which is an imagined transposition created by a particular physical environment such as a cinema, and other varieties of illusion.

[18] Goethe, *Tagebuch der Italienischen Reise* 1976, Letter of 21 September 1786, p. 79.

[19] On the German reception of French fetish theory in this period see Böhme 2006: 178–208.

[20] Blumenberg 1986: 262–3: 'Das Ding sei das einfachste Vorurteil, mit dem wir in einer Erfahrungswelt arbeiten […] Für die Geschichte bedeutet das Dingschema: auf eine Lebenszeit wollen wir wieder erkennen können, was wir gekannt haben'.

[21] Novalis 1993: 172.

[22] On the Museo Pio-Clementino see Gallo 2010: 237–58; on ekphrasis in Winckelmann see Décultot 2006: 1–41.

[23] Lessing 2007: 13–14, 52–67, and particularly § xvi, in this edition, pp. 116–21.

[24] Herder 1995: 80–1.

[25] Callistratus 1979: 419.

[26] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe 1992: 178: 'Gegen uns über im Palast Rondanini steht eine Medusenmaske, wo, in einer hohen und schönen Gesichtsform, über Lebensgröße, das ängstliche Starren des Todes unsäglich trefflich ausgedrückt ist….

Ein wundersames Werk, das, den Zwiespalt zwischen Tod und Leben, zwischen Schmerz, Wollust ausdrückend, einen unnennbaren Reiz wie irgendein anderes Problem über uns ausübt.'

[27] Feuerbach 1855 [1833]): 55–7: '[Hier findet die Einbildungskraft] statt einer vielstimmigen Harmonie, einen einzigen schreienden Laut, statt eines Vielartigen nur Eins. An dieses bleibt sie gebannt, und auf der Spitze eines Aeussersten peinlich festgehalten. Selbst in der Natur erhält das menschliche Angesicht in leidenschaftlichem Zustand etwas maskenartiges; die Züge werden leblos und starr, und in der Haltung der ganzen Gestalt, in jeder Gebärde erscheint die Bewegung nur wie das Zucken, die Ruhe wie die Erstarrung eines willenlosen Krampfes. Warum dieser steinerne Mimik in

Marmor wiederholen? besonders da dieser entbehrt, was jener immer bleiben muss, das wirkliche Leben.

Die Medusa Rondanini ist nur eine Maske, eine Maske mit den Zügen eines Sterbenden, sonach—die wahre facies Hippocratica! Aber welche Mannigfaltigkeit, welch' unergründliche Fülle des Lebens ist hier in den engsten Raum, in die wenigen Züge eines einzigen Kopfes, in den Moment des Todes zusammengedrängt!

Treten wir, die Augen schliessend und wieder öffnend, mehr und mehr vom Bilde hinweg: wir glauben das seltsame Wesen nun im Augenblicke langsam verscheiden, nun wieder aufleben zu sehen.'

[28] See for instance Goethe 1992: 523–5; De Staël 1807: 242; Moritz 1981: vol. 1,164–5; Böttiger 1808: 3–9; Bätschmann 1986: 145–62; Griener 2010: 133.

[29] On tableaux-vivants see Jooss 1999; Ramos 2014; on the variety of embodiment at work here see Barck 2009: 68–89.

[30] Goethe: *Italienische Reise* 1992: 257.

[31] Goethe, *Italienische Reise* 1992: 258: 'Der alte Ritter hält das Licht dazu und hat mit ganzer Seele sich diesem Gegenstand ergeben'; see also Böttiger 1795, and Pop 2011: 934–57.

[32] Goethe 1887–1919: Part One, vol. 20, p. 253: die Gegenwart des Wirklichen statt des Scheins [brachte] eine Art von ängstlicher Empfindung hervor[…]. See also Brude-Firnau 1980: 403–16, and Leonhard 2003.

[33] Agazzi 2000; Schmidt-Funke 2006.

[34] Brude-Firnau 1980 and Leonhard 2003.

[35] Böttiger 1810: 9–13, quoted in Jooss 1999: 295.

[36] Böttiger 1810, pp. 9–13, quoted in Jooss 1999: 295.

[37] Goethe, 'Über Laokoon', in Goethe 1967, vol. XII: 59–60: 'Äußerst wichtig ist dieses Kunstwerk durch die *Darstellung des Moments*. Wenn ein Werk der bildenden Kunst sich wirklich vor dem Auge bewegen soll, so muß ein vorübergehender Moment gewählt sein; kurz vorher darf kein Teil des Ganzen sich in dieser Lage befunden haben, kurz hernach muß jeder Teil genötigt sein, diese Lage zu verlassen; dadurch wird das Werk Millionen Anschauern immer wieder neu lebendig sein.

Um die Intention des Laokoons recht zu fassen, stelle man sich in gehöriger Entfernung mit geschlossenen Augen davor; man öffne sie und schließe sie gleich wieder, so wird man der ganze Marmor in Bewegung sehen […]. Ich möchte sagen, wie sie jetzt dasteht, ist sie ein fixierter Blitz, eine Welle, versteinert im Augenblicke, da sie gegen das Ufer anströmt. Dieselbe Wirkung entsteht, wenn man die Gruppe nachts bei der Fackel sieht.'

[38] Quoted by Claudia Mattos 2006: 146.

[39] Joubert 1983: 45: 'ces formes idéales et molles dont les corps animés semblent comme environnés [apparaissent] à chaque trait; ce qu'un philosophe appelait les apparences de l'âme'. See also 1938, vol. II: 748 and 573.

[40] Bülow 1897. Other accounts stressing the powers of torchlight viewing to animate statues are those by Böttiger 1798; Klingemann 1945 (1804): 195–203; Meyer, 'Über das Betrachten der Statuen bei der Fackel', in *Propyläen* and his *Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt.* Cf. Pfotenhauer 1991.

[41] Moritz 1981, vol. 2: 414 [1786–88]: '[Man kann] fast nicht sagen, man habe diese höchsten Werke der Kunst gesehen, wenn man sie nicht auch zum öftern in dieser Art von Beleuchtung sähe.—Die allerfeinsten Erhöhungen werden dem Auge sichtbar, und in dem, was sonst noch einförmig schien, zeigt sich wiederum eine unendliche Mannigfaltigkeit.

Weil nun alle dies Mannigfaltige doch nur ein einziges vollkommenes Ganze ausmacht, so sieht man hier alles Schöne, was man sehen kann, *auf einmal*, der Begriff der Zeit verschwindet, und alles drängt sich in einen Moment zusammen, der immer dauern könnte, wenn wir bloß betrachtende Wesen wären.'

[42] Marquet de Norvins 1846, vol. II: 91–2: 'A notre approche commença la représentation de l'animation des marbres: les mouvements ordonnés aux porteurs de flambeaux, s'opérant successivement ou à la fois, se communiquaient soudain aux statues soit par la fuite, soit par le retour des ombres; elles recevaient la vie de la lumière; dieux et déesses, hommes et femmes, réalisaient ainsi à nos yeux le miracle de Prométhée, animant sa statue au feu dérobé du ciel.…En présence d'une telle réunion d'êtres surnaturels…, dont les diverses attitudes commandaient, sous la magie de cette fantasmagorie si poétique, une sorte d'admiration ou de terreur religieuse.…Le silence rigoureusement observé pendant cette scène étrange et merveilleuse empêchait par lui seul toute comparaison avec la vie humaine; tandis que le jeu des lumières…variait à l'infini…les gestes de ces marbres, dont l'immobilité avait disparu.…Ainsi, par l'ingénieuse et puissante disposition de la lumière, Canova avait impose à toutes les statues la pantomime qui leur était propre.'

[43] A similar theatrical view of torchlit visits is voiced by the art lover Henry Matthews in Matthews 1820: 132: '[The statues] were made for torchlight as their proper element; and the variety of light and shade, which is thus produced, heightens the effect prodigiously. There is something of the same kind of difference between the statues by day and by torchlight, as between a rehearsal in the morning and the lighted theater in the evening.'

[44] See Nouvel 1990; Prache and De Bruignac-La Hougue 2016. The Captain Cook cycle was recreated, with postcolonial modifications, in an installation by Lisa Reihana, *in Pursuit of Venus*

[infected], created in 2015, that was part of the Oceania exhibition in the Royal Academy, London, and Musée du Quai Branly in Paris in 2018: Brunt and Thomas 2018, nr. 153.

45 Gandy, 'Prince Eugène's Dressing Room, Paris 1814' [Letter to John Soane], Soane Museum: Drawings Cabinet, Vol. 9 fol. n. 10, quoted in Ebeling et al. 2016: 339 note 5.

46 Casanova 1960, vol. iv, 48: 'Elle était surprise du prestige qui lui faisait voir partout, et en même temps, malgré qu'elle se tint immobile, sa personne en cent différents points de vue. Ses portraits multipliés que les miroirs lui offraient à la clarté de toutes les bougies placées exprès lui présentaient un spectacle nouveau qui la rendait amoureuse d'elle-même.' For eighteenth-century accounts of such immersive mirror spaces see for instance Laugier 1771: 254: 'L'important prestige de plusieurs glaces qui ne font que répéter jusqu'à la satiété les objets qu'on a sous les yeux'; see also Du Perron 1758: 70, describing interiors of the 1730s, Blondel 1774, vol. I: 90 and 104. See also Starobinski 1964: 39–41, and Hobson 2003: 68.

47 La Font de Saint-Yenne 1747: 13–15, quoted in a translation by Katie Scott in Scott 1992: 254.

48 Lajer-Burcharth 1999: 49–71.

49 Schwartz 2002 and 1992: 195–200.

50 D'Hancarville, 1766–78: vol. III: 144 and 145, vol. IV: pl 45.

6

Movement, Animation, and Intentionality

6.1 Animation and Human–Thing Entanglement

One of the conclusions of Chapter 4, on the presence of animal shapes in the candelabra, was that the presence of all these animal forms individualize, animate, and personify the artefacts they adorn. They allow the viewer or user to enter into a personal, emotional, and affective relation with the object. Assyrian chair legs in the shape of a lion's claw for instance suggest that these legs share some of the characteristics of that animal, but also that it is tamed into serving the owner or user of the chair. Animal figuration thereby opens the door to all kinds of imaginative scenarios in which traits of animals or humans are attributed to artefacts: characters, personalities, emotions, and volition. But it is always the viewer who endows objects with such qualities and thereby moves them into the world of human actions, emotions and beliefs. The previous chapter looked at a different kind of emotional transfer: at the uses of objects and images to replace the absent or the dead; at efforts to endow statues with the appearance of life through a theatralization of viewing in torch-lit viewing parties; or even by literally appropriating a work of art in the ephemeral embodiment of a tableau vivant. Embodiment itself became thematized in the handles, covers, lids and pedestals of Empire objects.

This chapter will leave the artistic literature of the decades around 1800, and Semper's anthropology of animal-shaped ornament, to see whether present-day psychological theory, by moving beyond traditional explanations evolving around the psychopathology of fetishism or projection, can help to understand this human tendency. To do so we will return briefly

to Piranesi and his candelabra, and the issues raised by the Uncanny Valley, because recent research inspired by it will contribute to an account of such emotional or even bodily investment in art that lifts them out of the realm of arthistorical anecdote, and provides at least the rudiments of a theory of these emotional and physical investments in art. The human tendency to see shapes and movement in patterns has often been described, for instance in Leonardo da Vinci's notes on discovering landscapes, faces, and animal shapes in the spots and blots on a wall.[1] But recently the tendency to attribute life to shape has been disconnected from the lifelikeness of such shapes, because it turns out almost any shape can be endowed with animation by some viewers at some time. Instead, it turns out, attributing life to a shape is linked to its (perceived) ability to move, and to attributions of intentionality, volition, and emotions associated with that ability. The previous chapters have shown how the emergence of neoclassicism, and in particular of the Empire Style, can be understood by retrieving a particular set of historical circumstances, such as the development of a new objectscape in Rome and Paris or Piranesi's transformation of Pantanello fragments into his restorations, or rather, free recreations of artefacts from Hadrian's Villa. They also pointed to a set of psychological conditions, such as the new immersive viewing scenarios and other varieties of human–thing entanglement that came into fashion around 1800. But these psychological aspects are exemplary of much more general human traits, that help to explain, and give substance, to what hitherto has been called human–thing entanglement, which is a suggestive term, but a label added a long time after the processes occurred which they name. Also, one might add that, like agency, it is the name of a problem rather than a concept with explanatory value. So we will now turn to two areas of present-day psychology, accounts of anthropomorphism and theory of mind, to move from a particular historical episode in the revival of Greco-Roman art to more general human traits at work in it.

6.2 The Uncanny Valley

In the previous chapter we left Piranesi in the Valley of the Uncanny, because of his ability to suggest life in his etchings and artefacts. In the candelabrum from the Ashmolean sporting hybrid birds for instance, the part framed by these birds includes a mixture of acanthus leaves and scrolls that suggests that there is a face hiding between the leaves. The candelabra are uncannily, one could almost say, similar to Rorschach images (Figure 4.32). They share the symmetrical structure and piling-up of features and shapes that lend themselves to interpretation as faces. In the same candelabrum the part below the ram's heads has a similar lay-out that also invites, when seen from a certain distance and lightfall, interpretation as a face with frowning eyebrows. We have already discussed the intentness of the lions' gaze in the Louvre candelabrum, or the inward-looking expression of the elephants in Oxford. In these cases the subtle treatment of eyelids, the downcase slant or upward direction of the eyes, invites the viewer to attribute life and intentionality to these images.

Rorschach images were developed as an instrument to test processes of perception and interpretation, but soon after they appeared in 1921 they were taken over by Surrealists and other artists because of what they suggest about the animation of art and man's tendency to see human features everywhere.[2] Rorschach images share important formal similarities—symmetry, vertical structuring, features that recall human or animal faces—with the larger category of grotesque imagery that is often considered to activate a possibly innate tendency of viewers to project anthropomorphic features onto images and objects, ranging from physical or anatomical features to social organization or even intentional psychology. This tendency is often explained as one of the effects of the cognitive dimensions of perception. The anthropologist Stewart Elliott Guthrie for instance argued that

> The most important pattern in most contexts is that with the highest organisation. The highest organisation we know is that of human thought and action. Therefore we typically scan the world with human-like models.[3]

Yet although widespread, this tendency is not very well understood, particular in the case of artefacts with figural features and art works. The main terms of projection, empathy and anthropomorphism used to account for it, when considered a little closer, all turn out to be quite formidable cans of worms. 'Projection' for instance is a vivid visual metaphor, but little more than that. 'Empathy' covers a range of very different psychological mechanisms, whose meaning in present-day psychology is different from that of *Einfühlung* when it was introduced in nineteenth-century aesthetics by Robert and Ernst Vischer.[4] Anthropomorphism is very determined by cultural, historical, and social contexts; the concept of innateness, and the question whether it implies universality, is something I'd rather not go into at all here. For our present purposes the anthropological and psychological accounts based on the concepts just mentioned, although certainly plausible, and based on much empirical research, have the additional problem that they are aimed at general human features of perception, and cannot account—nor do they aim to—for the particular forms and shapes of these objects, let alone their composition; nor do they address the complications raised when dealing with representation. So inspired by the recent exhibition *Persona. Etrangement humain*, held in 2016 at the Musée Quai Branly, on the attribution of presence and life to inanimate objects, from all around the world, I want to pursue a slightly more specific avenue of inquiry here, that does not take as its departure the projection onto images of human features or psychological traits in general, but one particular aspect: the projection of intentionality based on the representation of movement, both actual and arrested.[5]

As we have seen, Piranesi subtly adapted the depiction of the Cuthbert vase (Figure 1.7.a) to suggest movement and animation: by his handling of light and perspective, a stress on those parts that most resemble human limbs such as handles; and by dynamizing handles, suggesting that they are made not of stone, but of actual plant leaves capable of growth and decay. Next, let us look at a few exhibits in the Persona exhibition. In the wonderful array of experiments, films, objects, art works, and

tribal art they have brought together, a few contemporary art works stand out. They show how small modifications in artefacts make them seem alive: *Toporgraphie* by Jack Vanarsky, from 1998; *Eye Box* by Wang Zi Won, from 2007; and perhaps, most disquieting of all, the speaking bust created by a studio called Lifenaut, that looks so much, at first, like a Renaissance terracotta portrait bust (Figures 6.1–6.4).[6]

Figure 6.1 Jack Vanarsky (1936–2009), *Toporgraphie*, 1998, collection of the artist.

Figure 6.2 Wang Zi Won (1980–), *Eye Box*, 2007, private collection.

Figure 6.3 Antonio di Benintendi (ca. 1480–after 1529) (attr.), *Terracotta bust of Cardinal Giuliano de'Medici, subsequently Pope Leo X, c.* 1512, London: Victoria & Albert Museum.

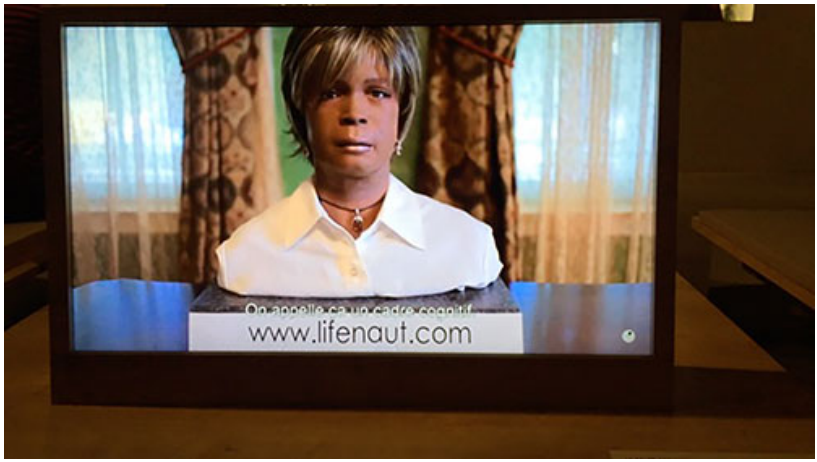

Figure 6.4 Lifenaut, *BINA48,* social robot created using video interview transcripts, laser scanning life-mask technology, face recognition, artificial intelligence, and voice recognition technologies, from 2007 onwards.

These artworks point at two important underlying psychological mechanisms: first, it is almost impossible for us *not* to attribute animation to moving objects, or at least, it is very difficult for us not to describe such movements in terms of emotion, will, in brief, intentionality. Often, describing moving objects in terms of animation and intentionality is the briefest, and most parsimonious way of doing so. Second, there is an evolution in such attribution, with a tipping point. Up to a certain point, increasing lifelikeness will increase the viewer's willingness to comfortably go along with the fiction that the art work or object is in some sense animated. But there is a tipping point, when the object becomes too lifelike. In reaction the viewer starts to feel that it is in fact uncanny. Robots can have this effect, as can films, or paintings, but viewers of Piranesi have frequently attested to this phenomenon, most famously in their reactions to the *Carceri* (Figure 5.2), where viewers tend to discern all kinds of living human presences in corners which at first appeared to be deserted.[7]

The concept of the Uncanny Valley was introduced by Josia

Reichardt in a study on *Robots: Facts, Fiction and Prediction*, published in 1978, but was inspired by the hypothesis of the Japanese robot engineer and theorist Masahiro Mori, who first showed his diagram that would lead to the term in 1970 (Figure 5.3). According to Mori, as the appearance of a robot is made more human, some observers' emotional response to the robot will become increasingly positive and empathic, until a point is reached beyond which the response quickly becomes that of strong revulsion. However, as the robot's appearance continues to become less distinguishable from that of a human being, the emotional response becomes positive once again and approaches human-to-human empathy levels. This area of repulsive response aroused by a robot with appearance and motion between a 'barely human' and 'fully human' entity is called the uncanny valley. The name captures the idea that an almost human-looking robot will seem overly 'strange' to some human beings, will produce a feeling of uncanniness, and will thus fail to evoke the empathic response required for productive human–robot interaction.

Some research has been done in perceptual and cognitive psychology to test this hypothesis and explain the phenomenon. Some scientists have suggested the uncanny effect is caused by what they call 'mortality salience': the great similarity between robots—or art works—and humans robs us of our illusion of uniqueness—everybody is mortal, as we tend to believe, except ourselves, and as a consequence this effect makes us more aware of our mortality in an unwelcome manner. Another contributing factor which is perhaps more interesting to us here is that uncanny artefacts and images set up a particular viewing interaction: it takes some time to establish whether the heads by Vanarsky are animate or not, whether there are people creeping around in Piranesi's *Prisons* (Figure 5.2), whether the strange, mutilated creatures in the *Vedute* are human or strange vermin, what is going on in these shimmering vases in the *Vasi, Cippi, Candelabri*, or in the *Grotteschi* (Figure 5.6), where fragmented statues appear on the brink of moving and speaking.

In its play on the sudden, and feared appearance of life where it is not expected, the Uncanny Valley presents a new stage in the

tradition of the uncanny, which is a romantic invention, starting life in the work of Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Nodier, Victor Hugo, and Ernst Theodor Hoffmann. For them the uncanny is all about the inanimate—house fronts, interiors etc—turning out to be alive. As Marina Warner has shown recently, it was an important theme in the new varieties of popular theatre developed after the French Revolution, such as the Phantasmagoria. There images of the victims of the Guillotine were transformed into living beings by means of smoke and moving mirrors.[8] Sigmund Freud's essay on 'Das Unheimliche', published in 1919, just after World War I, is the foundation of all subsequent explorations of this theme. In it he defined the uncanny as

> In reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression…the uncanny is something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light.[9]

With the entrance of the uncanny into robot design, the phenomenon was moved out of the realm of literary effects, aesthetic sensations, or psychopathology, and became the starting-point of psychological research into the attribution of life to objects.

6.3 Movement and the Attribution of Causality and Intentions

The Uncanny Valley experiments also throw new light on how we look at art. The hypothesis of the Uncanny Valley makes clear, as the Italian developmental psychologist Gabriela Airenti has recently argued, that lifelikeness is not the universal or only trigger for the attribution of life to inanimate objects; it does not lead automatically to such interaction, and can indeed, when it becomes too much, cause the opposite effect, that of revulsion and a rupture of the illusion of life.[10] Instead, other psychological mechanisms are at work here. We have already

seen that around 1800, lifelikeness, and the rhetorical ideal of *enargeia*, or a representation that is so vivid that the viewer is led to believe she is looking at the living being depicted and not at its image, had become discredited. They were replaced by accounts drawing on the new discipline of anthropology or emerging theories of psychopathology to explain the tendency of viewers to take the image for what it represents: fetishism, hysteria, or primitivism. Now, in the research inspired by the Uncanny Valley, we see a similar movement away from lifelikeness to account for the projection of animation onto objects, or what psychologists today call anthropomorphism, in a slightly different use from that current in art and particularly architectural history. Animation is here distinguished from anthropomorphism: the former is defined as the attribution of life to objects, and particularly intentional action; whereas the latter is the attribution of human mental *states or affects* (rather than shapes or formal features, as in art-theoretical varieties of anthropomorphism) to artefacts and non-human animals. Considered in these terms, the claims of participants to torch-lit visits to the Museo Pio-Clementino that statues became alive are cases of animism; whereas the claims by Forbin or Caroline von Bülow that the statues looked at them and seemed to understand them are instances of anthropomorphism. As the latter put it, '[T]hey really seem to look at you; it is as if there were a living soul within the marble, a soul to which you could confide your most inner thoughts.'[11]

But if lifelikeness is not the trigger to make us attribute animation to objects, and even to enjoy doing so until a certain point, the question what makes us do so, becomes only more urgent. In cognitive psychology this tendency is known as a variety of attribution, the process by which individuals explain the causes of behaviour and events. In 1954 the Belgian psychologist Albert Michotte published a book on the perception of causality. Following the arguments of Hume and Durkheim that causality is not a phenomenon or quality inherent in objects, but a connection made by the mind on the basis of repeated observation of sequences of events, he set up experiments in which he asked the participants to describe what they saw when

he showed them an object A that hit an object B, and thus put it in motion. They all, except a few persons suffering from autism, described these movements in terms suggesting causality, but also intention and even affect: '[he chases it, throws it in front, projects it'. In a second experiment Michotte made the first object keep its speed after touching the second. In that case the attribution of intention and affect became even more pronounced: 'A gets hold of B, takes him with him, catches it in flight.'[12]

Michotte here made an important point about the difference between inherent, what he called mechanical causality, and the phenomenon, or appearance of causality, which is one of the issues underlying much current debate, and misunderstandings, about the agency of artefacts and other inanimate objects.[13] But these experiments also demonstrated that human observers have a very strong, possibly innate tendency to attribute all kinds of causal narratives to moving objects. In these narratives intentions play a large part: 'the red ball wants to move the black one out if its way', for instance. This is what psychologists call animating anthropomorphism: the attribution of human personality traits, motives, and emotions, and above all intentionality, to clearly inanimate objects that do not have any likeness to human beings or even the higher mammals. Michotte demonstrated that simple kinetic features, such as movement towards something else, are the basis of such attributions. Very interestingly, he also argued that gesture, speech, or facial expressions are only additional refinements, as he called it, of this phenomenon, because they all consist of movement, or suggest the imminence of movement. It is not the threatening expression of our eyes that frightens children, but the sudden movement of our eyebrows and head.

Ten years earlier, in 1944, two American psychologists, Felix Heider and Marianne Simmel, had published another series of experiments that would add a substantial twist to Michotte's discovery.[14] They showed a short film to several cohorts of their students at Smith College, in which various geometrical shapes, circles, and squares move around and towards another geometrical contour, this time in the shape of a house with one opening. It turned out that practically all respondents constructed

a narrative of all sorts of personal relationships between the objects, going so far as fantasizing about unhappy triangles between a girl, her fiancé and an evil competitor. What stands out from this experiment, as from those by Michotte, is that *nobody* described what happened in the fragment in non-human, non-intentional terms. Even the one person who limited herself to geometrical descriptions of the shapes, and did not venture into anthropomorphism, still reported a narrative with all kinds of intentional movements.

This raises many questions, for instance, whether this is a culturally determined response, whether it depends on what we might call the viewing biographies of the participants in the experiment, and to what degree it is innate and possibly even an universal tendency. In the past twenty years Gabriela Airenti has conducted and reviewed a series of experiments on very young infants, that help to answer these questions, and also offer some clues on the implications for art of this tendency to attribute causality and intentionality on the basis of the perception of movement.

She quotes experiments of Mandler and Bauer, conducted in 1988, that show that twelve month-olds ordered toys and other objects on the basis of a distinction between biological and mechanical movement. Based on these experiments David Premarck formulated in 1990 the hypothesis that the ability to distinguish between animate and inanimate objects is based on the perception of, and ability to distinguish between, two kinds of movement: autonomous or independent, and mechanical. Infants would therefore be born with two innate concepts: one causal, which helps to identify objects that cannot move themselves; and one intentional, on which depends the perception of the independent, autonomous movement of living beings. And the presence of such independent movement would thus lead the infant towards an attribution of a mental characteristic, intentionality, to an object. In another experiment, by Karmiloff-Smith from 1992, kids aged between one and four were shown photos representing unusual objects, such as unknown animals or bizarre statues, and were then asked whether they thought such objects capable of mounting a hill autonomously. In their replies

they did not take into account the resemblance of these objects to living beings, but rather evoked the distinction between independent and non-autonomous movement. Airenti therefore concluded, going one step further than Michotte or Heider and Simmel, that humans, from their first infancy, are predisposed to think that a certain kind of movement implies intentionality, regardless of its appearance, shape or its being alive in a biological sense.[15]

She also noted that in these interactions of infants with moving objects, only two roles are consistently attributed to them: cooperation or resistance. This confirms Semper's intuition that the leonine features of Assyrian and Egyptian chair legs serve to express animation, and in doing so strengthen the impression of cooperation, if not submission of these furniture parts.[16]

But these experiments raise a new question: how can we account for the fact that infants do not attribute intentionality or anthropomorphism in the psychological sense to all objects that appear capable of autonomous, independent movement? Such attribution, Airenti argues, takes place only in an interaction: we find it difficult to believe that somebody *thinks* a car is a human being, but we find it quite normal that a person *acts as if it is alive*, and endowed with intentionality: we say to our car 'come on', 'don't stop' etc. This is not a constant and consistently held set of beliefs, but an interaction pattern that emerges in certain kinds of situations and manifests itself in a dialogue or dialogical situation. Hence psychological anthropomorphism as investigated here has two fundamental characteristics. First, as an expression based on attribution of intentionality to objects, it is a way of representing to oneself non-humans by assimilating them to humans, attributing beliefs, emotions, intentions, and perceptions to them. Second, it is manifested essentially in interactive situations. Therefore anthropomorphism does not only depend on attributing certain characteristics to non-human objects; it also needs these characteristics to manifest themselves in a particular, interactive kind of situation. One of the best-known examples of the tendency to anthropomorphize an object occurred within the context of ELIZA (Figure 6.5a and b), developed from 1964–66

by Joseph Weizenbaum at the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory.[17] ELIZA is the name of a computer with a software program that enables it to engage in a therapeutic dialogue with the person behind the keyboard. Many respondents reported these dialogues to be more rewarding than a live session with a real, living human being. The computer would ask very simple questions, like 'How is your father', and had a program that enabled it to react to the answers in a very engaging way: 'could you tell a bit more of that', or 'how do you feel about this?' for instance, would be part of its repertoire of answers. Hence, Airenti concludes anthropomorphism occurs when we place an object or an animal in the position of an interlocutor in a dialogue.[18] Or, as Michelangelo famously asked of his Moses: 'perchè non parli?''Why don't you speak?'

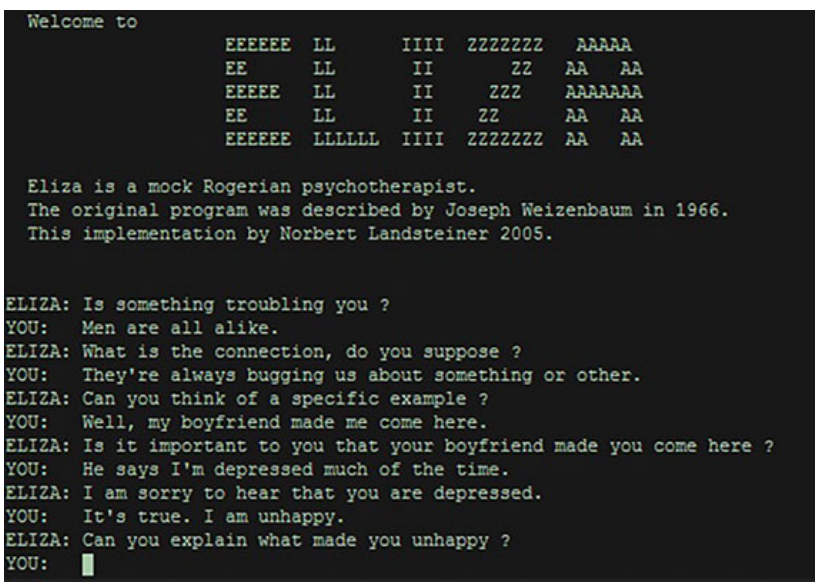
Welcome to
EEEEEE LL IIII ZZZZZZZ AAAAA
EE LL II ZZ AA AA
EEEEE LL II ZZZ AAAAAAA
EE LL II ZZ AA AA
EEEEEE LLLLLL IIII ZZZZZZZ AA AA
Eliza is a mock Rogerian psychotherapist.
The original program was described by Joseph Weizenbaum in 1966.
This implementation by Norbert Landsteiner 2005.
ELIZA: Is something troubling you ?
YOU: Men are all alike.
ELIZA: What is the connection, do you suppose ?
YOU: They're always bugging us about something or other.
ELIZA: Can you think of a specific example ?
YOU: Well, my boyfriend made me come here.
ELIZA: Is it important to you that your boyfriend made you come here ?
YOU: He says I'm depressed much of the time.
ELIZA: I am sorry to hear that you are depressed.
YOU: It's true. I am unhappy.
ELIZA: Can you explain what made you unhappy ?
YOU:

Figure 6.5a Joseph Weizenbaum (1923–2008), *ELIZA,* screenshot from a conversation, unknown date.

Figure 6.5b Norbert Landsteiner (dates unknown), mass:werk, *E.L.I.Z.A. Talking*, a project that embeds Weizenbaum's ELIZA program in modern browsers, started 2013.

6.4 Theory of Mind and the Attribution of Life to Artefacts

We can also approach this conclusion from a slightly different angle, that of trying to understand what goes on in the mind of very young infants. Various recent experiments have shown that the attribution of a social life to objects starts when infants are about 18 months old. It does not depend on particular features of the object like similarity to a living animal or relative. To explain this tendency we therefore have to turn to human cognition. That is, we have to turn to what psychologists call a theory of mind, which was introduced in a famous article by David Premarck and Guy Woodruff of 1978, 'Does the Chimpanzee have a Theory of Mind?'[19] Not to be confused with a philosophy of mind, a theory of mind is the ability in primates, including humans, to attribute

mental states such as beliefs, intentions, desires, knowledge etc., to one's self and to others; but also to understand that others can have beliefs, emotions or intentions that are different from ours, and that they can also have false beliefs. It is called a theory of mind not because it explains mental phenomena, but because it is based on inference from one's own mental processes to assume similar ones in other people's minds, to which we have no direct access. Accordingly, humans consider that their and others' behaviour is motivated by mental states they recognize in themselves such as love and fear, desire and hate. Also, the implementation of behaviour in others is seen as mediated by mental structures such as perceptions, goals and plans similar to our own. The first fundamental stage in children developing a theory of mind and thereby attributing mental states to others can be seen in the ability to see others as intentional agents. This ability is already present in infants; by six months infants begin to see human actions as goal-directed and by nine months they expect that people have goals. Various psychologists have considered that the source of this ability must be found in the perception of self-produced movement. By the age of twelve months children would possess a simple theory of rational action, which could allow them to interpret actions as a means to attain goals in different contexts.[20] Infants perceive actions as goal-directed; this concerns not only human actions but also actions performed by objects such as moving little yellow dots on a screen. These show that children are able to detect intentionality or goal-directed action and are disposed to evaluate actions, i.e. to consider the social value of actions. But in all these cases the actors turn out to be *objects*, dots, or wooden blocks. This shows that as soon as infants are able to interpret behaviour as intentional and social, they can extend such attribution of mental features to non-humans.

Again, the question remains why this happens, for children as for adults, only in some situations, and under certain conditions. As we have seen, such attribution is completely independent from the nature of the object. What does matter, Airenti argues, are the *motivation* and the *interactive situation.* To establish a situation in which one is familiar with, and feels connected with

animals and objects, and then proceeds to attribute mental states to them, a fundamental attitude is needed, based on innate concepts such as causality or intentionality, and the rudiments of a theory of mind not only applied to fellow human beings but extended as well to objects. The conditions for the implementation of such an interactive, dialogical situation are socially determined and transmitted.

But the reader may very well object that these experiments may have established that we all share this innate tendency to attribute causality and intentionality on the basis of the perception of movement, but that nevertheless these experiments only tell one half of the story. They tell us nothing about the fact that at the same time, we know very well that these objects, despite our tendency to attribute anthropomorphic traits to them, are inanimate, and without a mind. This is where the Uncanny Valley comes in again, because it helps to explain the paradox that we all have a tendency towards anthropomorphism, but find very anthropomorphic robots rather uncanny. That is, we are disposed to accept robots, or other artefacts such as wax images, as agents, as objects *acting* like human beings, but we find it very uncomfortable to consider them as well as beings that are conscious and *experience feelings or states of consciousness*. To understand this, we have to reconsider for a moment the—often very rudimentary—theory of mind involved in attributing anthropomorphism to objects. What the Uncanny Valley experiments show is that we need to make a very clear distinction, always according to Airenti, between first, acting towards an object *as if* it were endowed with mental states and emotions; and second, believing that they *really* have mental states and emotions. Conceived in terms of this distinction between acting and believing, attributing the capacity to *act*, even based on intentionality, to objects is quite reasonable, while attributing *feelings,* let alone consciousness, is not. It is therefore, Arienti concludes, particularly in 'the continuous reciprocal adaptations of expressions and emotions, much more than in gesture and words, that reciprocity does appear. That is the real, but mental basis for empathy.'[21]

Attributing animation to objects is therefore not a confusion of

basic categories, but the result of the general human trait to approach reality in a teleological way, viewing actions and movement in an intentional way; and in certain circumstances, this attribution is extended to objects as well. These circumstances have to do not only with the objects themselves but also with the situation in which such attribution occurs: that of interaction, more in particular dialogue. We all talk occasionally to our cars, laptops, etc; that is, we find it very easy to enter into a situation in which we *act* as if we attribute life to our car, but we don't very easily *believe* they live. The scene from Piranesi's biography by Legrand springs to mind, in which he enters into a dialogue with the stones and sun of Rome, and his etching needle. Perhaps the most challenging instance of this behaviour is the software program ELIZA, that mimicked a therapeutic session.

These conversational interactions with objects start at a very early age, in the imitation games that babies and their parents play all the time. In other words, the attribution of animation means that we place an object in the position of the interlocutor in a dialogue. This theory by Airenti opens up interesting perspectives, I believe, for the analysis of how this works in that other kind of dialogue, that is non verbal but nonetheless very reciprocal: the one between the art work and the viewer, in which the art work plays no less an active role than the viewer.

Since the publication of the Premarck and Woodruff article much debate has arisen about the emergence and development of a theory of mind in infants: whether it is innate, whether it is truly a theory, in the sense of a set of abstract principles, and if so, how do infants learn to apply these principles to concrete situations; or, whether a theory of mind is not so much a theory, but rather the capacity to read other minds, nourished by the ability to project ourselves imaginatively into another person's perspective, and thereby develop mental simulations of what goes on in other persons' minds.[22] At this point in theory of mind debates the similarities to nineteenth-century discussions about the nature of *Einfühlung* or empathy become obvious, but the difference is that theory of mind addresses only real life reading of other people's minds, not the imaginative projection into the

perspective of persons depicted in an art work.

6.5 The Attribution of Anthropomorphism to Art Works

The three main points of Airenti's account of anthropomorphism all recall many aspects of the candelabra, as well as the various situations of human–thing entanglement discussed in the previous chapters. The poised attitudes of the eagles and the inclination of the elephants' heads in the Oxford candelabra all suggest animals in motion, or being on the brink of movement. The way the eyes of the lions' heads are sculpted in the Louvre candelabrum suggest intent attention, and the feline legs, sometimes enlivened by lions biting into their own claws, suggest cooperation. Many of the art works and viewing settings discussed here afford a situation of dialogue and interaction, which creates familiarity, but is not based on lifelikeness: the torch-lit viewing parties invited a sense of the possibility of entering into a dialogue with the statues, and many participants reported on the flickering light creating movement, and in particularly suggesting that the eyes of the statues become alive. Forbin is perhaps most keenly aware of the staged, theatrical, fictional nature of these parties, and how they allow the viewer to act as if the statues are alive, with the theatrical setting functioning as a safety valve against believing that they are living beings.

There is also the long tradition of paintings inviting the viewer to enter into a dialogue, for instance in Bellini's San Giobbe altarpiece of *c*. 1480 (Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6 Giovanni Bellini, *San Giobbe Altarpiece,* oil on panel, ca. 1487, Venice: GallerieAccademia.

In the Bellini original setting in the Church of San Giobbe in Venice, the feet of St Francis appear to protrude from the perspectival space of the painting into the real space of the viewer. As he is the only Saint in the painting who looks at the viewer, this pictorial feature strengthens the illusion of the

possibility of contact.[23] The French art critic and theorist Roger de Piles in his *Cours de Peinture par principes* (1708), argued, in a reasoning that in significant respects prefigures the one of Gabriela Airenti, against lifelikeness as the foundation for an image's power to create a sense of involvement of the viewer. Instead he singled out quite abstract compositional features, such as brush work, colour, or the handling of light. He argued that paintings have an impact on viewers regardless of their subject matter. Composition and the execution of the whole cause the primary, emotional effect on the viewer. De Piles thus moves away from the mode of viewing visual art which was based on *ut pictura poesis*. Instead he focused on the visual representation of textual subject matter, and edges towards a visual apprehension of paintings that starts with the appearance of the work of art, not its textual content, and thus creates space for direct, visual, and emotional reactions in a dialogue between the work and its viewers. As he put it in the *Cours de la peinture*:

> [the] aim of painting is to seduce our eyes ….A real painting is therefore that one which calls us (so to speak) while taking us unawares: and it is only through the force of the effect that it produces that we cannot restrain ourselves from coming closer, as if it had something to say to us.[24]

Somewhat closer to our period, the *Notes on Sculpture* by the poet Shelley, written after his visits to the Uffizi and to sculpture collections in Rome in 1819, are quite revealing. In his notes on the Niobe group in the Uffizi (Figure 6.7) he wrote that:

Figure 6.7 *Florentine Niobids,* Roman copy of a Greek original by Scopas or Praxiteles, second half of the fourth century BCE, found in Rome in 1583 and brought to Florence in 1775; seen here in the Sala della Niobe at the Uffizi, Florence.

> Niobe is enveloped in profuse drapery, a portion of which the left hand has gathered up and is in the act of extending over the child in the instinct of defending her from what reason knows to be inevitable. The right hand – as the restorer of it has rightly comprehended, is gathering up her child to her and with a like instinctive gesture is encouraging by its gentle pressure the child to believe it can give security.[25]

Traditional *ekphrasis* would also infer the entire myth from a statue depicting a single instant, but would start from the vivid lifelikeness of the art work as the basis for a fictional engagement with the scene represented; whereas Shelley not only reads the entire unfolding fate in the gesture of Niobe and her child but singles out layer upon layer of intentions, emotions, volitions, hopes and fears, from the statues' suggestion of movement of the hands and arms of these figures.

One of the defining features of Empire art, as we saw in the previous chapter, is its immersive character. The painted wall

paper cycles by Dufour, the Turkish Bath at the Hôtel de Beauharnais with its mirrors that reflect each other endlessly, and the lifesize mirrors or Psychés all invite the visitor or viewer into spaces that invite, and enable, an absorption within the imaginary spaces that are thus evoked. But immersion is here not a one-sided, linear process in which the rooms and their furnishings exercise their immersive powers on a passive viewer. The Psychés set up a visual interaction between the persons in front of the mirror and their reflection, framing the reflection at the same time as if it were a stable image. Empire cups, soup tureens or chandeliers all invite the viewer, by their embodied handles with their suppressed, but nonetheless very visible arrested movement, to touch and grasp them; at the same time, by their very embodied arrested movement, they invite us to attribute emotions and volition to them, hesitating for instance to squeeze these delicate handles too tightly. And not in the last place, the animal paws that support chairs, tables, or candelabra all suggest that in a moment these objects might take to their legs and walk away.

This chapter began with the uncanny nature of much of Piranesi's work—uncanny in the sense that some objects or scenes that appear at first sight to be inanimate, or devoid of life, turn out on closer inspection to contain living beings, or to appear on the brink of moving or breathing, and appear to possess intentions and emotions. This in fact corresponds quite well to the definition by Romantic writers of the uncanny as the sudden unexpected discovery of life where one does not expect it, for instance when a face appears fleetingly in a mirror in an empty room; or when in Piranesi's *Prisons* it suddenly turns out that there is a human presence in the dark recesses. Now one of the intriguing features of the uncanny is that it is very often associated with architecture, and that it summarizes much of the mental process we have looked at today: the suggestion of movement sets up an interactive situation with the viewer, in which movement, or the representation of arrested movement that at any moment might spring into action, leads to a series of reactions or inferences in the viewer. Intentions, motives, emotions and actions, and sometimes a character or biography

are attributed to the object. This is not just a poetic flight of fancy, or culturally conditioned art talk. As the experiments by Michotte, Himmler, and Seidler, and Arienti have shown, such attribution of animation, intentionality and emotion is rooted in innate dispositions and concepts that infants can already exercise when they are less than twelve months old, and which are based on the human tendency to assume causality, intentionality, and will on the basis of kinetics, that is to attribute moving objects with such mental features. Put slightly differently, we all have a tendency to apply a rudimentary theory of mind that attributes intentions and volition to moving objects around us, particularly when these objects move independently, and in an autonomous way.

In the previous chapter we looked at a series of particular historical, artistic, and museological situations in which human–thing entanglement took place around 1800. Such entanglement was conditioned by situations of loss, and the desire for a return of a past; here I have attempted to give a psychological account of a particular variety of entanglement that lies at the basis, I believe, of almost all kinds of such excessive emotional investment in objects: the belief, often silent and implicit, that somehow objects share the emotions and intentions, will and motives that we feel. Considering such entanglement in the light of the work of Michotte and Arienti makes one thing very clear, however: it is very normal to *act* as if objects, when they move or appear to be able to move, in an autonomous way, are motivated by intentions and emotions. But it would be quite abnormal to actually *think* they do so. And it is precisely in this space, opened up by the distinction between acting as if and believing, and constituted as an interaction between object and viewer, that artistic human–thing entanglement can both unfold and be understood: as an exchange between objects whose design leads the viewer to engage with them, and to attribute to them mental states, as if they were animate. Such an approach, therefore, enables us both to understand what goes on in the viewer, but also to analyse the design, that is, the role of style, in such engagement. It aids to understand whence derives the intense investment in particular objects that is such an important

element, I would argue, in the development of a style.

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[1] Kemp 1989: 201–2.

[2] Rorschach 1948. See also Searls 2017; Uner-Astholz 1984; Warner 2006: 309–17, and in the review *Rorschachiana: Journal of the International Society for the Rorschach*, for instance Nashat 2014.

[3] Guthrie 1993: 10; Guthrie 2002: 38–76; Boyer 1996, and Gamboni 2012: 20–3.

[4] On the problems with projection as an explanation of endowing artefacts with animation see Van Eck 2019. For an overview of recent research see Coplan and Goldy 2014, in particular the essays by Coplan, Decety, and Meltzoff, Currie and Feagin. On the entangled histories of the concepts of sympathy, empathy, and related terms see Stueber in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/empathy, in particular Section 4. On the ontogenesis of empathy see Decety 2004: 65–9; for a developmental analysis of infants attributing animation to images see Freeman 2006: 135–45.

[5] It was curated by Emmanuel Grimaud, Anne-Christine Taylor-Descola, Thierry Dufrêne, and Denis Vidal, who also edited the catalogue: *Persona. Etrangement humain*, Dufrêne and Vidal 2016.

[6] Dufrêne and Vidal 2016: 148–9 and 211.

[7] On the *Grotteschi* see Nevola 2009: 148–82.

[8] Warner 2006: 31–47 and 147–59.

[9] Freud 1985: 335–76, here p. 365; see also Vidler 1992; Germer 1999, and Kemp 2003: 103–25.

[10] Airenti 2012, 2018, consulted 6 September 2019, DOI doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02136.

[11] Quoted in Bülow 1897.

[12] Michotte 1954: 18–19. See also Thinès et al. 2015: 275–6, and Scholl and Tremondet 2000: 299–301. See cogweb.ucla.edu: four typical demonstrations for a reconstruction of these experiments. Recently they were discussed in an article by Goldman 2013.

[13] See for a very clear summary of the confusion between phenomenal and ontological levels of description in current debates about agency Lindström 2015.

[14] Heider and Simmel 1944: 243–9.

[15] Airenti 2012: 41–5; and Airenti 2018: 6.

[16] Airenti 2018: 6.

[17] Weizenbaum 1976.

[18] Airenti 2012: 45–50.

[19] Premarck and Woodruff 1978. On Theory of Mind and the varieties developed after this article see the Introduction of Carruthers and Smith 1996.

[20] Gergely, Csibra, and Biro 1995; Gergely 2003: 287–92.

[21] Airenti 2018.

[22] Carruthers and Smith 1996: 6.

[23] See Shearman 1992: 94–107, and Van Eck 2006: 75–8.

[24] De Piles 1708: 8: '[la] fin [de la peinture], est de séduire nos yeux . …La veritable Peinture est donc celle qui nous appelle (pour ainsi dire) en nous surprenant: et ce n'est que par la force de l'effet qu'elle produit que nous ne pouvons nous empêcher d'en approcher, comme si elle avait quelque chose à nous dire.' On De Piles and his development of a pictorial theory of composition that departs from the Albertian tradition of conceiving composition primarily as the visual representation of a *historia* see the Introduction of Puttfarken 2000, on the transition from narrative definitions of composition to a pictorial one; and Puttfarken 1985.

[25] Shelley 1879: 42.

7

Conclusion

‘Antiquity is Only Now Coming into Being’: The Origins of the *Style Empire* and the Turn towards the Object, 1770–1820

At the brink of the nineteenth century, in 1798, the German scientist and poet Novalis observed, almost in passing, that Goethe had done for German literature what Josiah Wedgewood had done for the English art world; and he added that ‘One is very mistaken to believe that antiquities exist. Antiquity is only now coming into being. It grows under the eyes and soul of the artist. The remains of ancient times are only the specific stimuli for its formation.’[1] We do not know whether Novalis knew Piranesi’s work, but his words seem to have an almost uncanny aptness to describe what the Roman artist was doing: *creating* antiquity, not restoring, imitating, emulating or even recreating it from the surviving fragments, rubble and ruins that he found lying around, or had excavated from the swamp at Pantanello, where this book began. The comparison of Goethe to Wedgewood, in this context, is not simply a slightly flippant flourish of Idealist wit: it points to some of the major changes in the art world around 1800: the rise of the huge popular success of high art, allied with mass production and global dissemination, be they Wedgwood’s Etruria wares (Figure 7.1) or Goethe’s novels or plays. Both artists excelled in creative transformations of classical art works, whether Greek vases or the plays of Euripides, into new art works, art forms, and genres.

Figure 7.1 Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795) and Sons (manufacturer), 'Black Basalt' ware vase, *c.* 1815, imitating 'Etruscan' and Greek vase painting, Birmingham: Birmingham Museum of Art.

Novalis also points to another significant feature of what was happening in the art scene in Europe in 1800: its material nature, if not materiality. The material turn, I believe, did not kick off in the 1980s and 1990s among anthropologists and archaeologists, but had a major prequel in the period 1770–1820, on the

Continent, when the axis Cairo–Rome–Paris became a laboratory for a complete rethinking of the relation between the present and Antiquity. This laboratory came into existence, and was made possible, because the objectscapes in Rome and Paris had changed fundamentally as a result of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the archaeological campaigns started under French rule in Rome, the opening up of new trade patterns in the Near, Middle, and Far East, and the arrival on the market of large amounts of exotic objects. These came from Egypt, but also from the Asian and African collections of French and Dutch aristocratic collectors. Within these radically transformed objectscapes, the final global flowering of Graeco-Roman art took place, in the *Style Empire* in France, and more generally in what came to be labelled as Neoclassicism across Europe, Russia, and the Americas.

In this book we have taken a very close look at the three colossal candelabra that Piranesi made at the end of his life. We have reconstructed some chapters from the history of this object type, and from the Roman biography of these three objects; pursued their ramifications in Roman lamp lore, and how Piranesi gave them a new context among the lamps from the Mediterranean basin he included in *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi*. We have considered the formal resemblance of his candelabra to totem poles and what such a comparison might tell us about the role of animal features in the design of what Piranesi called *piccola architettura*, and about the appropriation of animal features by means of sculptural representation. We have also considered the intense emotional and financial investment in these and other Graeco-Roman objects that resurfaced, in fragmented form, in Rome in the second half of the eighteenth century. Finally, in the previous chapter I have argued that the entanglement these objects afford is exemplary of the innate human tendency to attribute emotions, will, and intentionality to movement, and by extension to its lively artistic representation.

The aim of all this was to understand somewhat better the intense investment, by artists, patrons, collectors, and the public, around 1800 in objects that somehow, by their design and formal or material features, by their presence and what we would now

call their agency or materiality, would make Graeco-Roman Antiquity present again, not as a paper exercise, a dream, or a theatrical illusion, but materially. This endeavour played a large part, this book argues, in the origins of neoclassicism. Style development is here considered from the perspective of the presence and agency of things and their cultural biography. Two, very different elements contributed to the development of such a style: the arrival, resurgence, and availability of antique fragments; as well as what for want of a contemporary phrase I have called human–thing entanglement. In this period this endeavour manifested itself in the drive of artists and archaeologists such as Piranesi to visually record, unearth, and restore as much of the remains of Rome as was humanly possible. It also manifested itself in the desire of collectors to obtain pieces from Hadrian's Villa as restored by Piranesi's Museo and other restorers. Restoration practices themselves also became the vehicles for this intense emotional involvement with Roman artefacts, as well as one of the major ways in which the development of the Empire Style actually took place, and was presented by contemporaries. We have also seen how, at the same time, new viewing settings and practices encouraged such involvement. In other words, this book has tried to bring together the anthropological and archaeological issue of what is variously called agency or human–thing entanglement with the art historical problem of understanding how styles are formed. It has also attempted to collect the historical evidence that will enable present-day theories in archaeology and anthropology about the agency of artefacts or human–thing entanglement to be productively applied in historical investigation, and bring into the equation some of the perceptual and psychological mechanisms at work in such entanglement. It is time to see whether we can draw these strands together, and come to some conclusions.

7.1 The Candelabra and Their Lives

At first sight, the biography of the candelabra as reconstructed

here looks almost like a textbook illustration of Kopytoff's theory of the biography of things: created as cult objects with limited circulation, they underwent, in commodification, a homogenizing process through which objects end up as commodities on the market, subject to the laws of price determination through the forces of demand and supply. They also went through the opposite cycle, singularization, in which objects are singled out, and set apart from the realm of commodities. In late Republican Rome candelabra started life as sacred objects, to end up as a fetish in a collector's home, according to Cicero's account. After their rediscovery they went through an accelerating process of commodification in the eighteenth century, put on the Roman art market by Piranesi, Cavaceppi, and dealers such as Jenkins. This was followed by a new phase of singularization, when they were given by Sir Roger Newdigate to Oxford University, acquired by Louis XVIII for the Louvre, or were preserved in the Museo Pio-Clementino, in a museum setting, withdrawn from commercial circulation.

But as we have seen, there is much more to their biography than cycles of commodification and singularization; or rather, these concepts do not go all the way to account for what happened to them. After some of their constitutive elements had emerged from the swamp at Pantanello, these candelabra went through a miraculous transformation at the hands of Piranesi and his assistants, to become new objects, impossible to classify as originals, fakes or restorations, and in fact new variations, or better, a new development, merging the formal types of the Roman candelabrum and thymiaterion that integrated the piling-up of figurative elements so characteristic of Renaissance versions of the Paschal candelabrum. In this respect they are very similar, if not prototypical, of the large majority of *Empire* artefacts: they use Graeco-Roman elements, and they look at first sight Graeco-Roman, but nobody with a first-hand knowledge of the art of antiquity would mistake them for such. A close comparison of Piranesi's candelabra with their antique ancestors therefore alerts us to the complexities of what is usually called the revival of classical art around 1800 and its eclecticist tendencies. Instead, I have argued in Chapter 2, we will understand more adequately

what goes on here when we draw on the concept of Alexandrianism, originally developed by literary historians and classicists to define the stylistic mixture of the high and the low, the elaborate and the simple, the obscure, the learned, and the popular, Asian and Attic styles, that is so characteristic of poetry in the period 200 BCE–100 CE, but also a defining feature of Pompeian mural painting of the second style, which Piranesi admired so much. Like Piranesi's late works it included Egyptian elements, inspired by the recent conquest of Egypt, and, as the so-called Alexandrian image shows, it includes many of the animal furniture that clearly inspired him (Figure 2.27).

It is precisely this elusive complexity that made the candelabra so highly prized by various groups of people in various stages of these objects' lives. Therefore, and this is a first important result, writing the *longue durée* biography of these artefacts enables us to understand the material basis, in their appearance, for the various cycles of transformation and appropriation, commodification and singularization they went through. By extension the biography of an object-type can now be written by constructing episodes of its design, execution, entry onto the market or into collections, loss, rediscovery, restoration, transformations into different materials, functions and locations, and preservation in a museum. In our case, we could start with the very earliest surviving cases of candelabra (Figure 2.11), move to the Graeco-Roman specimens, and their progeny in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, include Renaissance rediscoveries and integrations of the Christian type of the Paschal candelabrum, to end for instance with the bronze specimens made in the nineteenth century that adorn so many public spaces, for instance in front of the Panthéon in Paris or the Royal Palace in Amsterdam. And this would not be a history of an object type, nor one of influence in a chain of contiguities, but a history of development, transformations, rediscovery, adaptation, and recreation fuelled by the dynamics of the situations in which these revivals take place.

When a variety of object types that are characteristic for a style, such as the tripod, candelabrum, Psyché, and trophy for the Empire Style, are studied together, we can reconstruct, from the

perspective of the object, the emergence of a style. Such an enterprise would thus force us to rethink the dynamics of style development, and traditional definitions of what Sir Ernst Gombrich called the motors of stylistic change in terms of the agency of individual artists, patrons or collectors. Instead, we have seen that *restoration* was a major vehicle for the development of a style such as the Empire Style. In contrast to the traditional rhetoric of imitation and emulation of classical good taste used by its creators and historians this consists of artefacts that are very free, opulent combinations of elements from different styles from the Mediterranean basin. Inspired by Hadrian's combinations of the Egyptian, Archaic Greek or Augustan, with a dose of Piranesi's interest in Etruscan design, these artefacts are glittering transformations, presented as restorations of Augustan Rome. Their inspiration was Piranesi's Museo, where together with the candelabra a great range of what he called *piccola architettura*—chairs, lamps, tripods, vases etc—was created that incorporated fragments found in Tivoli into new objects and object types.

The presence of animal features points to another major factor shaping their revival around 1800. The inclusion of so many animals makes the Piranesi candelabra stand out from their Roman ancestors, like the majority of his late designs for furniture, vases, or chimney pieces, and their progeny in the work of Percier and Fontaine and other Empire designers such as Feuchère. If we think about this for a moment in terms of Semper's intuitions about animal features as enlivening expressions of subservience, or Pierre Francastel's reading of the totemic image as an appropriation by representation, one of the functions of this animal presence could be to manifest the connection with older styles that were particularly important for Napoleon's successor state: Egypt, and behind Egypt the older empires of Persia and Assyria, that also stand out by their very prominent beasts (Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2 Furniture support: female sphinx with Hathor-style curls (Assyrian), eighteenth century BCE, Ivory, gold foil, 12.7 × 10.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The presence of these animal motifs thus becomes a statement of artistic and by implication political pedigree, or of what we might call, with a variation on Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory constructed as ritual coherence, an instance of material coherence. Constructing such series has been done before, for instance in Gottfried Semper's pedigrees of motifs representing the four basic crafts of humanity—weaving, carpentry, ceramics, and iron work—and their transformations across different materials and object types.[2] The new element here is that the selection of objects that make up the series, and the connections

made between them, are not founded on a model of stylistic adaptations and revivals based primarily on aesthetic or artistic considerations. Instead they are based, in the case of artefacts made in a context of political patronage, on two motivations that work closely together: on the one hand, the desire to recreate the past, by means of objects of a variety of antiquity; and on the other, the desire, felt intensely by successor states such as Napoleon's Empire to assimilate itself to an older, more prestigious regime, in his case that of Augustus. Just as the latter had found Rome as a city of brick and left it a city of marble, Napoleon found the floundering French Republic, and would cast a layer of granite—one of the signature materials of the Pharaohs—over its shifting sands.[3]

7.2 The Progeny of the Artefacts in Piranesi's Museo

Constructing such series of objects therefore means writing new histories of things. In the case of the genesis of the Empire Style this history is very often one of rediscovery and restoration. It is prefigured in the reception of the Amemptus altar (first century BCE, now in the Louvre) in Paris in the early eighteenth century. As Daniela Gallo has shown, its arrival, coming with a highly prestigious pedigree from the Della Valle and Borghese collections, directly influenced French design. The history of its impact began to be written very soon after the Louvre had become a museum, which allows us now to document its dissemination.[4]

Two other iconic artefacts, which show quite clearly that here style development operated through restoration, or what was presented as such, are the Bacchus and Ceres Thrones now in the Louvre (Figure 4.10), brought in the 1790s to Paris, and considered by some, but not by Ennius Quirinus Visconti, under whose direction they were restored, as prime examples of Roman art. They are now considered to be mainly the work of Franzoni, with only minor parts genuinely Roman and dating from Hadrian's reign.[5] Nevertheless, they frequently appear, in various adaptations and transformations, in Percier and Fontaine's

collections of designs, their *Palais, maisons, et autres edifices modernes dessinés à Rome*, and *Recueil de Dessins*, and thus became one of the *objets générateurs*, one could say, of the style they helped to create (Figure 7.3). More in general, Percier's architectural fantasies made in the 1790s are populated with objects also depicted by Piranesi, or similar to ones in his Museo, and would provide the storehouse for the designs collected in the *Recueil de dessins* (Figure 7.4).[6]

Figure 7.3 Charles Percier and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine,

Frontispiece of Cahier VIII of *Palais, maisons, et autres edifices modernes, dessinés à Rome*, Paris [1798].

Figure 7.4 Charles Percier and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine, *Fauteuil et Vases executés à Paris dans la Maison du C.D.*, pl. 5 in *Recueil de décorations intérieures comprenant tout ce qui a rapport à l'ameublement…*, Paris 1801.

Objects restored in Piranesi's Museo played a substantial role in populating Empire Style design. The Barberini candelabra as publicized in *Vasi, Candelabri* make an appearance in David's *Andromache* and Ingres' design for a tomb for Lady Lucy Montague.[7] Perhaps the most successful career was enjoyed by Piranesi's engraving of the Isis Tripod. It was included in Percier and Fontaine's 1801 edition of the *Recueil de decorations intérieures*. After this design the Manfredini Brothers in Milan, and Biennais with Percier and Fontaine in Paris made real tripods of gilt bronze and lapis lazuli. Recently another specimen, made for Eugène de Beauharnais, resurfaced in the art trade. Their

influence was not restricted to France or the French Empire. Through an etching after Piranesi by Vincenzo Brenna, from 1784 active as an architect and archaeologist in Saint Petersburg, it served as the model for a vast range of consoles, tables, or tripods produced in Russia and across Europe, and thus became the defining piece of furniture for what was variously called the 'goût retour d'Egypte', Pompeian or Empire Style.[8]

The Oxford candelabra had a family of descendants of their own, in different media: small silver versions were made by the Roman goldsmith Giuseppe Boschi for Carlton House; Charles Tatham made a version in mahogany which is now in Kenwood House; he also made a candelabrum incorporating the pelicans also by Boschi for his patron Henry Holland, which is now in the V&A. Their designs were also propagated through Tatham's publications, as well as through Henry Moses' *Collection of Antique Vases*, published in London in 1814. The Warwick vase, depicted in the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi* had a very substantial progeny as well, in stone (for instance in front of Senate House, Cambridge, gifted by the Duke of Northumberland when he became Chancellor of the University), rosso antico marble by Benedetto Boschetti, now in the Toledo Museum, or in the guise of silver and gilt wine coolers made by the English silversmiths Benjamin and Paul Storr.[9] The marble original had such prestige that it was the first object Napoleon planned to take to France if his invasion of England were to be successful.[10]

The marble vase with vine leaves, cupids, and serpent handles featured in *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi*, which had been excavated at Tivoli and was bought by the Marquess of Buckinghamshire for Stowe, was the model for the Doncaster Racing Cup of 1828 made by Rebecca Emes and Edward Barnard.[11] The chimney flanked by feline monopods included in the *Diverse Maniere*, preceded by a beautiful chalk drawing now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, inspired François-Joseph Bélanger in his design for a set of andirons for Marie-Antoinette, now in the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. Subsequently the motif was taken up by Percier and Fontaine as well as Thomas Hope. Piranesi had already designed a chimney for the latter's father, the Dutch banker, which is now on display in the Rijksmuseum (Figure 7.5).[12]

Figure 7.5 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Chimney Piece*, 1761–1769, white marble, 133 × 193 cm, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum.

The boar-shaped rhyton also included in the *Vasi*, to cite a last example, was made in marble and ended up in the Royal Collection in Stockholm. A much smaller, gold and gilt version, after designs by Théodore Brogniard, became part of the highly prestigious diplomatic gift of an Olympic *surtout de table*, offered by Napoleon to Tsar Alexander I, and used to be on display in Moscow.[13] Other copies of these rhytons survive, for instance formerly in the collection of Hubert de Givenchy, and in the Louvre. The furniture designs by Thomas Hope show many Piranesian influences, from the tripod supported by three legs in the shape of chimeras now in the V&A to numerous egyptianizing elements inspired by the *Diverse Maniere*.

Piranesi's French students and admirers took his designs into French interior and architectural design: we find animals in the

designs of French architects who were inspired by Piranesi, such as Legeay or Petitot, but also, and often in very prominent, if not ambivalent, positions, in the work of architects and interior decorators such as Percier and Fontaine.[14] Their interior designs for Napoleon and his family, at Malmaison for instance, the redecoration of the Louvre, the Hôtel de Beauharnais, or the Hôtel de Charost inhabited by Pauline Borghese, now the British Embassy, originate in Piranesi's interior decoration of the Caffè degli Inglesi. They are populated by furniture inspired by, and sometimes directly copied from, the artefacts in the Museo and the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippe*.

Piranesian artefacts thus spread across Europe, in a profusion if not epidemic of furniture, vases, candelabra, tripods, and chimney pieces. It is striking that this category, what he called *piccola architettura*, had a much larger progeny than his few executed buildings; the buildings inspired by his etchings are also much more limited in number. The rooms displaying late eighteenth-century design in the V&A for instance, allow one to trace the influence of Piranesi, through the interior and furniture design of the Adam brothers and William Chambers, on Regency design.[15] One possible explanation for this could be that for the chimney designs there were no classical precedents, since the Greeks and Romans did not use them. In the *Ragionamento Apologetico* that serves as a preface to the *Diverse Maniere*, he had argued that one should not take the portico as the prototype for their design, as Palladio had done, or Serlio, since it makes no sense to have a door-framing device in an interior. Instead, chimney-pieces are a design type, a class of their own; part of the *piccola architettura*, closer to dress and objects such as vases than to porticos, doors, or other features of monumental architecture. Hence their ornament obeys different laws. Piranesi therefore felt free to invent an entirely new feature of interior design, which occupied an interestingly ambivalent position because it was both a constructive element as part of a wall, and an entirely ornamental one, more closely related to *boiseries* and other panelling, or heraldic features. He was therefore one of the first designers to identify interior design, and the furniture and other objects that populate it, as a new discipline, and a new category

of artefacts that are no longer subject to Vitruvian rules, or those of French defenders of a *retour à l'antique* such as Mariette or Laugier. Instead the entire range of forms created in the Mediterranean world could be used in them. Also, their very trajectory in Piranesi's work, from fragments found in Pantanello to poetic restorations, reproductions in etching, and transformations of stone, or metal, and from one genre to another, offered a new way of thinking about the creation and dissemination of such varieties of *piccola architettura*. In an exercise of cultural epidemics one could thus map the spread of his work in a way similar to the spread of microbes. An entire Piranesian objectscape could be reconstructed, ranging from Rome to Moscow and St Petersburg. It would include transmission routes consisting of editions of the *Vasi*, *Candelabri, Cippi*, artefacts bought in the Museo, designs after these artefacts and their reproductions, new commissions, and the actual routes travelled by objects of cultural diplomacy such as the *surtouts de table* offered by Napoleon to Alexander I.[16] The next step would be to map this objectscape on the spread of the Empire Style and thus visualize the role of Piranesi's late work in its development. This would take us far beyond the scope of this book.

7.3 A Radically Changed Objectscape

At the moment the candelabra were created and travelled to their final destinations, in the years 1770–1820, the objectscapes of Rome and Paris changed dramatically, as a result, first, of the renewal in excavation campaigns, for instance at Tivoli (Figure 7.6), that led to a significant increase in artefacts, statues, vases, sarcophagi, etc. available on the art market. The increasing financial and political instability of the 1780s and 1790s resulted in a number of major collections coming up for sale: the Doria-Pamphilj and Giustiniani collections for instance, of which important parts would ultimately find a new home in Wilhelm von Humboldt's brain child, the Altes Museum in Berlin. In the 1790s several great French collections would follow: those of the Duc d'Orléans for instance, not to mention that of the French

royal family. Collections from countries conquered by Napoleon started to travel as well, first to Paris, and after 1815 would return, in some cases, to their countries of origin. Collecting habits also changed, most conspicuously and influentially in the Villa Albani (Figure 7.7).

Figure 7.6 Giovanni Battista. Piranesi, *Avanzi della Villa di Mecenate a Tivoli costruita da travertina a opera incerta* from *Vedute di Roma* (Ficacci 936) [ca. 1778], 445 × 665 mm.

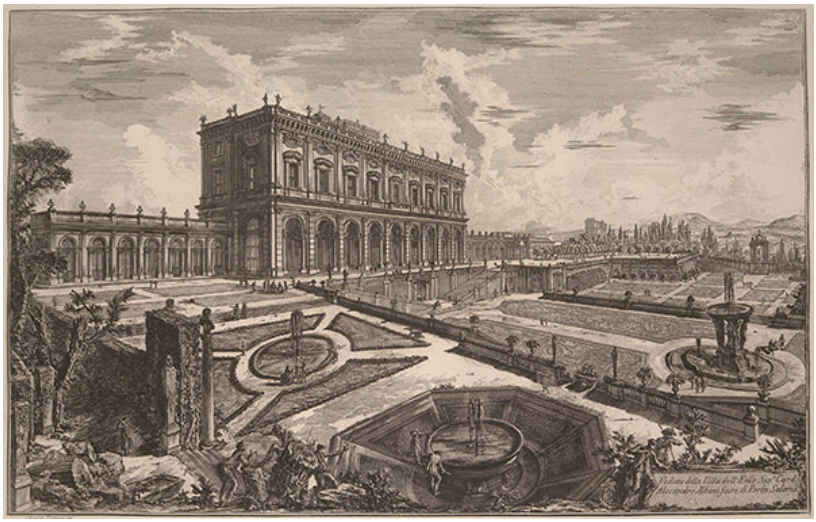

Figure 7.7 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Veduta della Villa dell'Em.o Sig.n Card. Alessandro Albani* from *Vedute di Roma*, Ficacci 960) [ca. 1778], 430 × 690 mm.

The Giustiniani collections were formed exclusively of Greek statues or the Roman copies taken to be Greek originals, its display in the family Palazzo serving to exhibit the wealth and taste of Vincenzo Giustiniani. Cardinal Albani had a villa built for the purpose of housing his collection, and unlike his sixteenth- and seventeenth-century predecessors, he did not limit himself to Graeco-Roman antiquities from the Greek and Roman heartland, but also welcomed significant numbers of objects from the borders of the Empire.[17] This collection was the laboratory in which Winckelmann was able to write his *History of the Art of Antiquity*, but also the stage where the fashion for torchlit sculpture viewings was probably born. The frame of the entrance to the Gallery by the Villa architect Carlo Marchionni, with its combination of sphinxes, a tripod from Hadrian's Villa and feline monopods framing the Citharoedus relief, is a visual manifesto of that ambition to include all Mediterranean culture in its display (Figure 7.8).[18]

Figure 7.8 Carlo Marchionni (1702–86), design for the North Portal of the Villa Albani, pen and brown ink, brush and crayon, grey wash, graphite on cream paper, 41.7 × 28.9 cm, *c.* 1750, New York: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

Here Piranesi contributed the lunettes and spandrel of the side door to the main salon with their trophies taken from Trajan's column and the Trophies of Marius. Percier and Fontaine would include an engraving of this lunette relief as the heading to the

chapter on the 'Fragments antiques tirés de la Villa Albani' in their *Choix des plus célèbres Maisons de Plaisance de Rome et des environs* of 1809, and may subsequently have inspired their design for the Salle de Vénus in their redecoration of the Louvre as Imperial palace for Napoleon.[19]

The emergence of these new objectscapes led to a new sensitivity to the traces that the passing of time leaves on surviving monuments from Antiquity to question the value of Greek architecture as a model for contemporary design. When we look for instance at the way in which Piranesi depicts the ruins of Paestum (Figure 7.9), the Lago Albano, Tivoli or the pedestal of the Column of Antoninus Pius (Figure 7.10), near the Corso, and compare this with sixteenth- or seventeenth-century representations of such monuments, it becomes evident how much his etchings convey the material presence of these ruins; their very material nature, the incursion of time upon their pristine integrity, but also their stubborn endurance. The Paestum series, which like the *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi* date from the very last years of his life, are radically different from conventional renderings. As Sigrid de Jong has shown, his drawings convey the material presence, the weight and load of stones, the way the changing light of day affects their appearance, and their struggle with decay; but they tell us nothing about proportion, construction and very little about structure.[20] Piranesi's etchings are the paper equivalent of the stone leaves in the book of Roman antiquities Quatremère tried to preserve. They convey, in other words, the material presence of these remote, ancient antiquities.

Figure 7.9 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vue des restes de la celle du Temple de Neptune* from *Différentes vues de Pesto*, Paris 1800–1809, 450 × 670 mm.

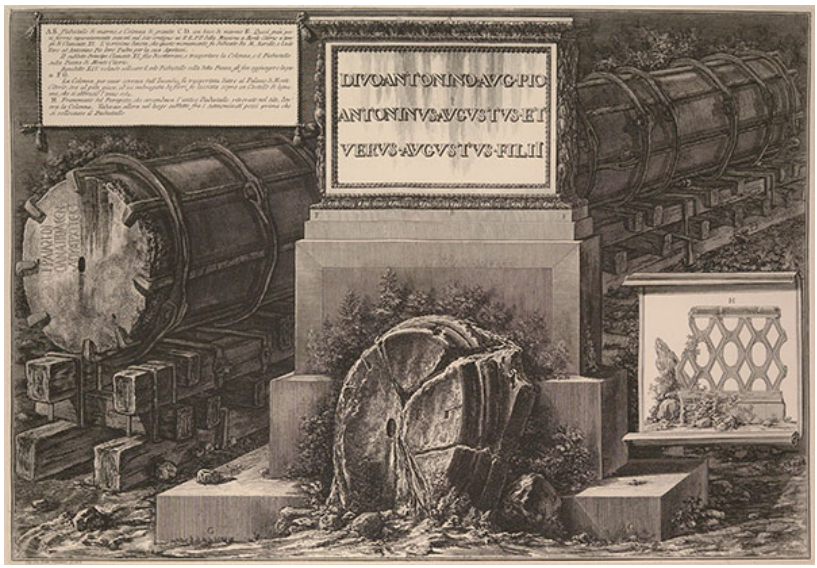

Figure 7.10 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Base, tamburo di colonna*

e diversi frammenti from *Trofeo o sia Magnifica Colonna Coclide* [ca. 1780], 480 × 700 mm.

The series of developments and events sketched here, which all happened around 1800, together created a singular moment in Western art history that I would call the precursor, in many respects, of the material turn that started in the social sciences and humanities in the 1990s. There is the dramatic increase of connectivity with its stream of objects travelling across the world; political upheaval combined with a sudden increase in globalization; a sudden awareness of the importance of the object as a major constituent of culture; and also a complete rethinking of the status of an art work, and why this should be accorded to some art works, but not to others, which manifested itself in the polemics in Paris about what kind of artefacts should be shown in the Louvre or the Muséum of the Jardin des Plantes, and which ones should be staged at the Musée des Monuments Français.

That is, the profoundly changed objectscapes that emerged in Rome and Paris around 1800 led to what we might call a precursor of the present day's material turn. It enabled, or in some cases forced those who dwelled in these new landscapes, to rethink the relation between the present and the past, and the ways in which absent antiquities could be made present again—not in texts, and by means of the literary culture of rhetorical imitation and emulation, but by taking the artefacts of Graeco-Roman or Egyptian antiquity and restoring, recreating, appropriating, and transforming them. Now the point of this all too brief argument for a turn towards the object around 1800 is that it encourages us, just as the advocates of the present-day material turn argue, to reconsider the emergence of styles in a much broader way than art historians traditionally tended to do. Put more provocatively, what the material turn advocates do, is completely undermine, if not ignore, traditional hierarchies between high art, singular, unique works of exceptional aesthetic value, created by unique individuals of genius, with its own historical dynamic; and the artefacts that make up material culture, which are utilitarian, often mass-produced, by anonymous makers, etc. They do so, because they see artefacts

primarily, as Alfred Gell did, as the material constituents of the networks of relations both between humans, and between humans and things, that together form a society. In this perspective, artefacts are actors just as persons are, and can become part of the same kind of entanglements as persons with other persons. What I have therefore done is to inquire into the features of a group of artefacts that may account for their very well documented agency—after all, money talks, in a very loud and clear way, just as collecting is one of the clearest evidences of an object's agency—but also to look at the situations in which their agency can unfold, in a much longer chronological scope than Alfred Gell did; at the ways in which those involved at the time made sense of it, and how we might do so from the perspective of present-day psychology.

In this book I have thus tried to pursue the new lease of life that Piranesi gave to the rubble found at Pantanello when he created candelabra, vases, tripods, or rhytons from these fragments. It aims to bring together the anthropological and archaeological issue of what is variously called agency or human–thing entanglement with the art historical problem of understanding how styles develop. Contrary to his claims about the candelabra being truly Roman work, found 'tale quale' in the swamp near Tivoli, it turned out they were highly original, new creations, but considered by him as restorations. This turned out to be a key notion to understand how Piranesi and the sculptors who worked for him considered their work, and to understand contemporary perceptions of the emergence of the new style which in the 1920s would be labelled 'neoclassicism', and in particular of the Empire Style. Another key aspect to understand the agency exercised by the candelabra are their animal features, which led both to considerations of the uncanny effects of the animation these suggest, and served as a bridge to provide a broader understanding of the attribution of animation to artefacts in present-day terms of developmental and perceptual psychology. Restoration also turned out to be a vehicle for the material expression of emotional involvement with objects, and in particular for using them as a replacement for the dead and the absent. This desire extended itself, as we have seen, into a more

general dream to create a new material presence of Antiquity, in the brief period in which people were able to wander through a new, unmediated objectscape filled with surviving fragments from the Roman Empire.

Piranesi's Candelabra and the Presence of the Past: Excessive Objects and the Emergence of a Style in the Age of Neoclassicism. Caroline van Eck, Oxford University Press. Caroline van Eck 2023. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192845665.003.0008

[1] Novalis 2001: 409–10: 'Goethe ist ein ganz praktischer Dichter. Er ist in seinen Werken—was der Engländer in seinen Waren ist—höchst einfach, nett, bequem und dauerhaft. Er hat in der Deutschen Literatur getan, was Wedgwood in der englischen Kunstwelt getan hat…. …man irrt sich sehr, wenn man glaubt, daß es Antiken gibt. Erst jetzt fängt die Antike an zu entstehen. Sie wird unter den Augen und Seele des Künstlers. Die Reste des Altertums sind nur die spezifischen Reize zur Bildung der Antike.'

[2] See Semper's 'excursus on tapestry' in *Der Stil*, where he applies this concept of *Stoffwechsel* or transformation of materials to tapestry, from its earliest use in Assyria, through its representation in tiles and reliefs, its use in ephemeral scaffoldings used in Roman triumphs, its transformation into stone triumphal arches, and throughout the Middle Ages: Gottfried Semper 1860: vol. I § 68: 258–301; see also Kalinowski 2017: 80–106, and Hvattum 2004: 75–87.

[3] 'La nation, qu'est-ce? Des grains de sable…. Croyez-vous que la République soit définitivement assise? Vous vous trompez fort. Nous sommes maîtres de le faire mais nous ne l'aurons pas, si nous ne jetons sur le sable de la France quelques masses de granit.' Quoted in Dansette 1969: 206–8.

[4] *Annales du Muséeet de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, which started to appear in 1801; the *Musée Français* (1803) and *Les Monuments antiques du Musée Napoléon*; see also Dominique Vivant Denon 1803: 10. Cf. Gallo 2007–2008: 30.

[5] Cf. Gallo 2007: 101–22.

[6] See Garric 2017: 109 and 110.

[7] On Piranesi's activities as a designer and their influence, in particular of his chimney pieces see Wilton-Ely 1993: 121–66. Bélanger for instance included designs taken from the *Diverse Maniere* in his *Livre de*

Cheminées, *c*. 1770–80, now in the BNF; Wilton-Ely 1993: 143. Panza 2017: 105–31 has a very inclusive, state of the art survey of the dissemination of artefacts from the Museo and their impact on design.

[8] See Martoni 2016. The tripod Piranesi depicted is now in the Museo Nazionale Archeologico in Naples, inv. 72995.

[9] See González-Palacios 2007. He misidentifies the David and Ingres depictions of a candelabrum as one made by Piranesi for Oxford. See also González-Palacios 1976: 38 fig. 31a for an image of the Toledo version of the Warwick Vase; and González-Palacios 1984: figs 281–3 for Boschi, fig. 287 for versions of the Warwick Vase, and fig. 276: Luigi Rhigetti, tripod, gilt and polished, c. 1815, Naples: Capodimonte; fig. 283: Giuseppe Boschi, two candelabra with pelicans and sphinxes, gilt bronze and rosso antico, Firenze: Palazzo Pitti; fig. 292: sculpture gallery in Deepdene, aquarel van Thomas Hope en William Atkinson, Lambeth: Minet Library, met candelabra, tripods etc.; see also the website of Koopman Rare Art Ltd in London, where the Storr wine coolers were on display when consulted in July 2021. There are also various conspicuous versions of the rostral column: by Luigi Valadier in Madrid, in the Grand Trianon in Versailles, but also on Piazza del Popolo in Rome.

[10] Cf. Udy 1978. A silver copy of this vase is now in the British Museum.

[11] Cf. Wilton-Ely 1993: 155–7 [Leeds Art Galleries].

[12] Cf. Wilton-Ely 1993: 138–9.

[13] On this *surtout* see Nouvel 2020.

[14] See Brunel 1978.

[15] Cf. Panza 217: 124, and Stillman 1967.

[16] On the emerging discipline of cultural epidemics see Wengrow 2015: 3–7 and 19–24.

[17] See Winckelmann 1986: 53–8, and its analysis by Ludwig Tavernier in the same volume, pp. 69–115; and Allroggen-Bedel 1982.

[18] Cf. Wilton-Ely 1993: 139, fig. 134.

[19] Wilton-Ely 1993: 140–2.

[20] De Jong 2010: 334–51.

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